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Perceived Influence of an Acting Class on Students' Verbal Communication Skills

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, The University of Michigan, 1983

BA, Indiana University, 1982

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Research demonstrates a widening gap between verbal communication skills expectations of employers and the perceived abilities of higher education graduates. Recent studies have also suggested that the art of acting is an effective pedagogical tool for developing oral communication skills; however, investigations of a beginning acting class in a higher educational setting are limited. The research question examined undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment. This generic qualitative inquiry investigated and analyzed 8 undergraduate students' perceptions of how an acting class helped improve their verbal communication skills for future work after graduation. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory acted as a conceptual framework. Data were collected through 2 semi structured in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion of 8 participants. The participants were undergraduate students who had taken a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university in the northeastern United States. NVivo 12 was used to organize and manage the collected data. Data were analyzed through coding, from which themes emerged. The participants perceived that an acting class positively affected an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills to help them gain employment after graduating. Positive social change may come from students who successfully build their oral communication skills during their college years, find a job after graduation, and become contributing members in their community.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my maternal grandmother, Estelle Samsel, who is my inspiration in all I do. My grandma had ears that truly listened, arms that always welcomed me, and an open heart that accepted me for who I am. She instilled confidence, perseverance, and determination in me to succeed. All these attributes were essential in my completing this doctoral journey. Thank you, Grandma! A day never goes by that I don't think of you and wish you were here by my side. Grandma, this is for you with much love!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Communication is a fundamental component of ourselves as it makes us who we are. Verbal communication is essential in our daily lives to connect with other individuals and exchange information. Successful interaction with other individuals requires clear and effective spoken communication. Dewey (1929) stated, "Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful ... when communication occurs all natural events are subject to reconsideration and revision" (p. 166). Society is born and cultivated through communication (Dewey, 1934). More important, communication is the impetus for making meaningful shared experiences (Dewey, 1929).

Unfortunately, the challenges of talking to people we do not know is a concern and problem in today's employment environment. Job recruiters are learning that the current higher education graduates lack the soft skills that potential employers are seeking (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2018a; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019). Soft skills are an individual's life skills and personality traits; they are nontechnical competencies such as verbalized communication and interpersonal interactions that employers are seeking in the 21st-century global job market (Martin, 2019; Stewart, Wall, & Marciniec, 2016). In today's global market, many employers consider soft skills as essential as learned or hard skills in potential employees (Tang, 2019).

There is a widening gap between the verbal communication skills expectations of the employer and the perceived abilities of higher education graduates (Stewart et al.,

2016). This research study added to the body of research on the development of a student's verbal communication skills during their undergraduate school years. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns. Positive social change may come from students who successfully build their verbal communication skills, during their collegiate years, find employment after graduation, and become a contributing member in their community.

Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the study, including an introduction, background, problem statement, purpose statement, and a research question. A definition of terms will then be presented to provide concise meanings of key concepts or constructs used in the study. The concluding sections will include a conceptual framework, the nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. A summary section at the end of Chapter 1 provides a transition to Chapter 2, the literature review.

Background

The primary purpose of higher education is the development of a student's technical and nontechnical skills throughout their undergraduate journey (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2018b). Ansar and Ikhfan (2018) conducted a mixed methods study assessing the soft skills development of undergraduate students whose education is based on a teaching and learning pedagogy of integrating hard skills (classroom learned) and soft skills (life learned). The authors revealed that the development of the verbal communication aspect of soft skills in students at the

university was not at their best achievement and required attention. They found that students preferred passive communication to active communication. Ansar and Ikhfan (2018) concluded that mastering soft skills are essential for students in higher education; however, other teachings and learning pedagogies aimed at developing a student's soft skills need to be explored.

Each year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers publishes the results of a survey forecasting the hiring intentions of employers; especially, new higher education graduates. The current findings of the National Association of Colleges and Employer Job Outlook surveys, 2017-2019, which were completed by potential employers and job recruiters, revealed several job skills employers are seeking in the new graduates. The desired skills included teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019). Results from the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2018 survey revealed the percentage of employers who rated recent graduates as proficient in communication skills was 41.6%. In comparison, the survey also discovered the percentage of students who considered their communication skills as proficient was 79.4% (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018). The 2018 Bloomberg NEXT survey also discovered current graduates deficient in the development of their soft skills before graduating from liberal arts colleges and universities (The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 2018). Lastly, the Association of American Colleges & Universities survey of 501 business executives, in the private and non-profit sector, revealed that employers view current higher education graduates as unprepared in the

skills and knowledge areas that they deem most important. Only 40% of business executives rate recent graduates as well prepared in the skill of oral communication (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2018a).

In a mixed study assessing the role of communication education for graduate employability, Clokie and Fourie (2016) determined the employer's view, understanding, and relevancy of potential graduate's verbal communication skills and compared their perspective with the communication course syllabus of a first-year compulsory communication class at a higher education institution. The authors proposed the following soft skills as essential for graduate employability: taking the initiative, possessing verbal communication skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork. The results of the surveys, completed by employers, revealed that communication skills were a highly rated graduate attribute that employers were seeking in potential employees. Initiative and motivation were also traits that were highly rated by employers in the surveys. In analyzing course descriptors, Clokie and Fourie (2016) discovered that all course syllabi indicated theories and topics of some form of communication; whether it be interpersonal communication, non-verbal communication, and listening. The study also revealed that communication strategies regarding groups/teamwork were also common. However, there was only one course descriptor that mentioned motivation in relation to group processes. The authors asserted that their survey of employers aligned with prior research on the topic. Clokie and Fourie (2016) concluded that employers do seek higher education institution graduates with relevant soft skills and practical communication skills. More importantly, they asserted that the research findings suggest that a first-year required communication course may not be adequate in preparing

students for the expectations of employment.

A gap has broadened between the perceived abilities of higher education graduates and the soft skills expectations of the employer. In today's global market, many employers consider soft skills as essential as hard skills in potential employees. In a quantitative research study, Stewart et al. (2016) explored how confident higher education students felt about their soft skills abilities. The top five soft skill abilities that the study focused on were leadership, teamwork, written communication, problem-solving, and verbal communication. A Likert scale survey was administered to students in a four-year university in the northeast. The results of the survey revealed that most students are confident in their soft skills abilities. The highest degree of confidence, ranking highest to lowest, was problem-solving, written communication, teamwork, and verbal communication.

In comparison, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2017 survey, employers' rate recent graduate abilities in problem-solving, written communication, teamwork, and verbal communication as all somewhat proficient (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017). Stewart et al. (2016) described the major limitation of the study as not having the ability to explain how or what criteria the students employed to measure the competencies of each soft skill attribute. The authors concluded that both employers and higher education graduates acknowledged the importance of soft skills abilities for employability post-graduation.

An article in the American Association of Community Colleges Journal addressed why employers are looking to community colleges for help in teaching soft skills. Pierce (2019) explained, "Employers across a wide variety of industries say the so-called 'soft'

skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration have grown in importance as rapid advancements in technology have transformed their operations" (p. 20). The author also mentioned that current employers are working with community colleges to develop curriculums that enhance the soft skills employers are seeking in potential employees. In partnership with community colleges, employers are providing additional experiential learning opportunities (internships and apprenticeships) to students to assess their soft skills in a work environment. Internships and apprenticeships offer students a chance to home in on their soft skills. More importantly, today's global job market student employability requires strong, soft skills in addition to hard skills (Pierce, 2019).

In a qualitative research study, Tang (2019) investigated how early career researchers defined the term employability and how they identified the characteristics of graduate employability. The author also explored how soft skills training can be embedded in higher education curriculums to enhance graduate employability. The participants in the study proposed that employability is having a set of skills and knowledge to gain employment. They characterized employability to include both the hard skills (learned technical skills) as well as the soft skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, team-working, and communication skills).

The results of the study also discovered that most participants agreed that higher education institutions provide the technical skills required for employment, but lack emphasis on the likewise needed soft skills. Participants of the study emphasized the importance of acquiring soft skills for graduate employability. Most importantly, all participants agreed that soft skills training could not be taught as a stand-alone subject,

but rather, soft skills training should be embedded in higher education curriculums. The use of roleplay/simulation in appropriate courses was suggested as a method of soft skills training. Team-working and communication skills for employability are embedded in roleplay/simulation instructional activities (Tang, 2019). Last, Tang (2019) concluded that there is a gap between a graduate's confidence in their soft skills attainment and the employer's perception that graduates lack essential soft skills for employment.

This qualitative study explored the effect of a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university and its influence on a college student's verbal communication skills. There is a relative lack of current research on the effects of communication training offered to undergraduate students at liberal arts colleges and universities. Most of the existing literature consists of studies on the results of communication training, through elements of theatre, on students in postgraduate professional schools such as medical, nursing, dental, and business schools (Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson, Mawdsley, & Hanlon-Smith, 2016; Jacob, Larter, Blair, & Boyter, 2019). Researchers have also documented the role of theatre/acting as a strategy in enhancing the development of communication skills (Dickinson et al., 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson & Reeves, 2019). Likewise, scholars have well-documented theatre as an effective pedagogical tool in all the learning stages of education (Gray, Pascoe, & Wright, 2018; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; López, & Jiménez, 2018; Miles, 2018). Considering the initiative to include an acting course in the liberal arts curriculum may provide a unique opportunity for validating theatre as an effective pedagogical tool in the development of undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. Hoffmann-Longtin et al. (2018) suggested that roleplay/simulation allows higher education students the opportunity to learn in situations

that simulate workplace circumstances. The addition of an acting course into liberal arts education may provide students more options for developing the job skills needed in the 21st-century job market that is lacking in today's graduates.

The significance of this study was filling a gap in the current research on the influence of an acting class on the development of a student's verbal communication skills. This research contributed to the knowledge in the discipline regarding undergraduate oral communication skills. Higher education stakeholders may benefit from a student's perspective on strategies that helped in the development of their verbalized communication skills. The first-hand accounts of the students' perceptions may provide higher education stakeholders with additional information to craft strategies, policies, and practices that enable students to develop the work skills needed in today's global job market. This research study also contributed to the strategies of job skills preparation, which may lead to improved higher education graduates with essential job skills; thus, contributing to positive social change after graduation.

Problem Statement

The Association of American Colleges & Universities (2018b) states that the primary purpose of higher education is the preparation for employment in today's global society. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is essential in all work environments. However, a problem exists with the current college and university graduates lacking the proper verbal communication skills required in the 21st-century job market (The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 2018).

Higher education institutions offer undergraduate students professional development courses and communication courses as options for verbal communication

skills development. However, the outcomes from these options are not producing the soft skills that potential employers are seeking in higher education graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019; Stewart et al., 2016; Tang, 2019). Additional course options may be needed, at liberal arts higher education institutions, for students to choose from to develop their job skills for future employment (Clokie & Fourie, 2016; Pierce, 2019).

Researchers have recognized the influence theatre/acting possesses in a learning environment. Studies on theatre as a pedagogical tool are documented in all the learning stages of education (Bhatia, & Pathak, 2019; Clarke, Binkley, & Andrews, 2017; López & Jiménez, 2018; Ulubey, 2018). The use of theatre/acting as a teaching strategy is also effective and common in professional learning institutions. Healthcare education employs roleplay/simulation to teach their students effective ways to communicate (Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson, & Reeves, 2019). However, I did not uncover any research that connects these three threads (theatre or acting, communication skills, experiential learning) together within a field of higher education.

Scholars have examined the connection of acting in theatre to cognitive and educational benefits (Greene, Erickson, Watson, & Beck, 2018). In arts education, researchers have explored the effects of disciplinary literacies in drama in higher education (Bell, 2016; Kornetsky, 2017; Szasz, 2017). Researchers have also documented the role of acting as a strategy in enhancing the development of communication skills (Dickinson et al., 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson, & Reeves, 2019).

Additionally, many researchers have studied the connection between the art of acting and postgraduate education, especially in healthcare education, such as medical schools, nursing training programs, and pharmacy schools. Roleplay/simulation was not only an effective strategy to develop healthcare students' verbal communication skills, but it also enhanced the realism of real-life clinical situations for the students (Barron, Khosa, & Jones-Bitton, 2017; Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Hart & Chilcote, 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018). Researchers have agreed that experiential learning environments promote the development of an individual's life-skills, including verbal communication skills (Bradberry, & De Maio, 2019; Duncan, Birdsong, Fuhrman, & Borron, 2017; Fede, Gorman, & Cimini, 2018). In higher education environments, improving oral communication skills through experiential learning experiences has also been the subject of researchers' studies (Duncan et al., 2017; Sang Joon, Wilder, & Yu, 2018; Tabak, & Lebron, 2017). However, little research exists on the development of verbal communication skills in an experiential learning theatre environment at a higher education setting. This qualitative research study would explore the perceived influence of an acting class on the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. The results of the study would help fill the gap in the research literature on the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communications skills in an experiential learning theatre classroom in higher education institutions. The gap was increasing between the soft skills abilities of graduates in higher education and employer's expectations of graduate's soft skills abilities. There was a widening gap between the soft skills expectations of employers and the soft skills abilities of higher education graduates (Stewart et al., 2016). A perspective from students may provide

higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal

communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the

institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight

into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills

that are required for future employment. I explored and analyzed a sample of

undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the

student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. The

phenomenon of interest was the undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence a

beginning acting class played in their verbal communication skills development.

Research Question

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are undergraduate student's perceptions of the

influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal

communication skills for future employment?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework and foundation that informed this study was Kolb's

Experiential Theory and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory. Additionally,

the selected concepts of acting, improvisation and roleplay/simulation, also supplemented

the conceptual framework. I will elaborate, in more detail, on the conceptual framework

and its supplemental concepts in Chapter 2.

Experiential Learning

Learning is a process where knowledge is shaped by experience (Kolb, 2015). Experiential Learning emphasizes the process of learning rather than the outcomes of learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb & Kolb, 2018; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014; Tomkins, & Ulus, 2016). More importantly, perception, cognition, behavior, and experience are all woven into the fabric of experiential learning (Kolb, 2015). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory builds on the scholarly works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Kolb has incorporated these scholar's works into an experiential learning theory that is suited for the twenty-first century (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Kolb (2015) defined experiential learning as a primary source of learning that emphasizes direct sense impression through experience. In describing his experiential learning theory, Kolb (2015) emphasized that knowledge is the outcome of analyzing and transforming the experience.

The individual plays an essential and vital role in the experiential learning cycle. The cycle includes the individual first having an experience; then reflecting on the experience; followed by conceptualizing and making conclusions on the experience; finally, experimenting and trying out what they have learned in the next experience. The experiential learning cycle is subjective and an ongoing and unending process (Kolb, 2015). Moreover, experiential learning aligns with the constructivist theory of learning where upon learning outcomes vary and are uncertain. Learners are the beholders of their education through their reflection of the learning process, and not, outcomes. Moreover, Kolb's experiential learning is commonly used in today's field of education (Mercer et al., 2017; Munge, Thomas, & Heck, 2018; Smith, Parks, Parrish, & Swirski, 2018).

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that everyone modifies their way of speaking with whomever they are communicating with (Giles, 2016). CAT is a process that magnifies and reduces communicative differences with speakers during linguistic interactions. Giles (2016) proposed that CAT is an essential communication strategy for comprehensibility of intercultural communication exchanges. CAT allows each speaker in a conversation to maintain their own personal and social identity during the verbal interaction (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). By keeping their individual and social identities, speakers portray a positive image of themselves to the other person in a communication exchange (Giles & Ogay, 2007). However, the weakness of the theory lies in the fact that communication is a complex process that involves not only the exchange of messages through words but also messages through body language, eye contact, and gestures (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

There are two constructs of CAT. The first construct is convergence, which is defined as matching our speaking manner with the vocal style of those we are in conversation (Giles, 2016). The adjustment of our speaking method when in conversation is selective (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). An individual may adjust their communication manner through convergence to connect with the person they are communicating with and to reduce social differences (Giles, 2016). An individual's culture and norms guide the accommodation process during convergence (Gasiorek, 2016). Convergence also influences the tempo of an individual's speaking manner when in conversation to emphasize caring and empathy in the communication process (Giles, 2016). Examples of using a convergence approach in communication include

conversations with individuals who speak a different language and intergenerational conversations (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

The second construct of CAT is divergence, which is a non-accommodation speaking manner that is subjective to the communicational need of a conversation and highlights the linguistic differences between both speakers (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). Giles (2016) proposed that divergence does not warrant any effort nor need to make communication any smoother or reduce social differences. Individuals practice divergence when communicating to demonstrate and maintain their social identity. Examples of using a divergence approach in communication include parent-children and teacher-student conversations (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Divergence communication in the workplace demonstrates superiority or hierarchy of roles by maintaining distance, through communication style and manners, between employers and employees (Gasiorek, 2016).

Giles (2016) proposed that human beings are an evolving and adaptive species. As natural as it is for individuals to adapt to their surroundings, individuals just as naturally accommodate and non-accommodate to their communication exchanges. Communication Accommodation Theory is subjective in its application during conversations; thus, speakers are in control of its use in the verbal communication process (Giles, 2008).

Acting in Theatre

Acting is viewed as being more personally involving and therefore also seen as interpreting life. However, acting not only interprets and imitates life, but it reflects society, as well, and heightens life's experiences (Cassady, 2007). Researchers and

scholars have well documented the importance of theatre and acting as a learning strategy in the field of education (Bell, 2016; Ivory, Dwyer, & Luscombe, 2016; Li, 2017; McKinney, O'Connor, & Pruitt, 2018; Segedin, 2017). Group work and hands-on experiences are increasingly being employed as a useful pedagogical tool in higher education (McKinney et al., 2018). Theatre and acting courses are categorized as group work and hands-on experience courses offered in liberal arts education curriculums today. In the Northeast sector of the United States, beginning acting classes focus on the art of acting through theatre pedagogy methods of acting exercises, improvisation, roleplay, and scene study (Rider University, 2019; Rowan University, 2019; Stockton University, 2019). More importantly, success in these acting learning strategies are often linked to the development of interpersonal communication skills; thus, demonstrating that theatre/acting is an effective pedagogical tool (Bell, 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson, & Reeves, 2019; Segedin, 2017).

Improvisation. An element of acting is improvisation (Brockett & Ball, 2011). Yamamoto (2017) proposed, "Improvisation is the creation of new material by an individual or group immediately or without prior planning" (p. 7). Improvisation is a collaborative art form and an act of spontaneous (unscripted) reaction employed as an acting and teaching technique in Theatre (Jagodowski, Pasquesi, & Victor, 2015). Actors in the theatre refer to improvisation as unscripted acting. Viola Spolin is often referred to as the mother of improvisational theatre. Viola developed a new approach to teaching acting through theater games; later known as improv (Spolin, 1999). Spolin (1999) proposed that improvisation creates an environment where an individual enters an unknown situation, event, or relationship and explores it with an audience. Moreover,

improvisation in the field of Theatre is spontaneous and without planning (Shem-Tov, 2018). Improvisation is an effective teaching and learning tool in the classroom utilized to assist in the development of speaking skills and listening skills (Barker, 2016; Hains-Wesson, Pollard, & Campbell, 2017; Ratten & Hodge, 2016). The studies revealed that reflection and assessment "in the moment" is an impetus for ongoing discussions on what is succeeding or failing in student development. Lastly, improvisation is useful and relevant in performance-based classrooms, such as an acting class (Hains-Wesson et al., 2017).

   Roleplay/Simulation. Another element of acting is roleplay (Brockett & Ball, 2011). Roleplay/simulation is an educational technique in which individuals spontaneously act-out problems of human relations and analyze the enactment with the help of other role players and observers. In the Theatre discipline, roleplay is an acting technique that allows an actor to transform themselves into a character using scripted words (Hagen, 1973). In professional training programs, simulation is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment. Theater and acting methodology can provide simulation educators a framework from which to establish an acting convention specific to the discipline of healthcare simulation (Dickinson et al., 2016). Sebold, Boell, Fermo, Girondi, and Santos (2018) suggested that roleplay is considered a clinical simulation approach to learning in the healthcare field. Roleplay/simulation is an acting technique that is effective in developing cognitive and interpersonal skills (Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins, & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich, Gillespie, Boesch, Bateman, & Grubb, 2017). Roleplay/simulation also encourages

creativity and stimulates the imagination (Heinrich, 2017). In similarity to improvisation, roleplay/simulation enhances the development of oral communication skills and listening skills (Hawkins, & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017).

The conceptual foundation that grounded this qualitative study is Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory. Two selected concepts of acting, improvisation and roleplay, would also be the contextual lens through which the research will be guided and analyzed. The primary focus, in this qualitative research, was to explore the undergraduate students' perceptions of their experience in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played in the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment. Dewey (1934) declared, "Art is the most effective mode of communication that exists" (p. 298). I hoped to gain insights from the exploration of the undergraduate's perceived experiences to assist me in connecting the conceptual framework and its supplemental concepts to verbal communication skills development. I will elaborate, in more detail, on the conceptual framework and its additional concepts in Chapter 2.

Nature of the study

The nature of this research was a generic qualitative study, which explored and provided insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I investigated and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also referred to this type of research study as a basic qualitative study or a qualitative interpretive study. Constructivism is the

underlying foundation for a generic qualitative study; as a result of which knowledge is gained through experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative researchers conduct research studies in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The location of my research study was Beta University (pseudonym), a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. The beginning acting class was in the School of General Studies. The maximum student enrollment for the class was 20 students. There were no pre-requisite courses needed to take the introduction to acting class. The sample population was current undergraduate students who had taken a beginning acting class at the Beta University. Two in-depth interviews in a semi-structured format were conducted, per participant, to study the student's perceptions of the phenomenon. In addition to the in-depth interviews, the method of data collection also included a focus group discussion, and document analysis (field notes, data log, and course syllabus).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) cautioned researchers to be vigilant when analyzing data as the process is often considered the most challenging part of the research process. Moreover, the authors suggested that the purpose of the qualitative data analysis process is to understand and interpret the data inductively and comparatively. The data analysis process answers the research question. Thus, the two in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion would be digitally voice recorded to assist in the data collection. GoTranscript, an online transcription service, provided complete verbatim transcripts of all the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion. I coded the data for themes with hopes of arriving at the core of the participant's experiences. I used the qualitative software analysis, NVivo 12, to aid in organizing the data collected from the research.

The methodology process for my research study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

I will define the key terms that are used in my research study. The definitions, in this section, will give understanding, clarity, and context to the keywords throughout the research.

Acting: Stanislavski (1936) defined acting as a technique by which an actor attempts to empathize with the character being portrayed to offer a realistic interpretation to the audience. The two elements of acting are improvisation and roleplay (Brockett & Ball, 2011). Acting and roleplay are dramatic techniques of simulation methods (Dickinson et al., 2016).

Beginning Acting Class: The class is part of the curriculum at a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States; the site of my research study. The name of the class is "Introduction to Acting." The syllabus for the course reads, "This course is for undergraduate students interested in exploring their talents. Through improvisation, theatre games and scene study, students examine how actors strengthen and use imagination, awareness, and creativity, and how they analyze, prepare and perform a role" (Beta University, 2019).

Improvisation: Yamamoto (2017) defines, "Improvisation is the creation of new material by an individual or group immediately or without prior planning" (p. 7). Actors in the theatre refer to improvisation as unscripted acting. Spolin (1999) proposes that improvisation creates an environment where an individual enters an unknown situation, event, or relationship and explores it with an audience.

Roleplay: Roleplay is a form of acting exercise. Roleplay is an acting technique that allows an actor to transform themselves into their characters using words from the playwright (Hagen, 1973). Heinrich (2017) defines, "Roleplay works because it simulates, that is, creates an illusion of real life. A roleplay simulation can be so convincing as to be virtually indistinguishable from the same thing in everyday life" (p. 3). Roleplay is an active learning strategy in the education environment employed to improve communication skills (Gordon, & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins, & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017).

Scene study: Scene study is a training method for actors. Actors rehearse a scene from a playwright's script to master their craft and train their acting skills (Cassady, 2007). Theatre creates an environment where actors try to understand their character's world (Brockett & Ball, 2011). Timoney (2018) stated, "Scene study is the art of analyzing a scene and working out what you need to do to really bring the script to life" (para. 3). Furthermore, Miller (2010) suggested, "No amount of exercises, improvisation, or theatre games can do for you what going through the process of analyzing, synthesizing, blocking, and working a scene can and will do" (p. 75).

Simulation: Dickinson et al. (2016) defined simulation as the application of acting and roleplay as simulation methods. Simulation-based learning is an acting technique that is effective in developing cognitive and interpersonal skills (Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017). Simulation/roleplay encourages creativity and stimulates the imagination (Heinrich, 2017).

Soft skills: Soft skills are abilities you learn outside of the academe setting (Stewart et al., 2016). Soft skills are non-technical competencies, such as communication

and interpersonal interactions that are required in the 21st-century global job market (Stewart et al., 2016). Tulgan (2015) described soft skills as life skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, people skills, and interpersonal skills, such as communication skills.

Theatre: In this study, theatre encompasses several connotations. Theatre is a dramatic form, theatre is a pedagogical tool, and Theatre is the art of acting (Schonmann, 2011). Brockett and Ball (2011) asserted, "Theatre is a complex art at least twenty-five hundred years old...But it is important to remember that Theatre does not require a written text, dialogue, or conflict" (p. 5-6).

Verbal Communication: Verbal communication is the process of exchanging information among individuals through words and dialogue. Giles (2016) defined verbal communication as the transmission or reception of messages through dialogue interactions. Verbal communication is an essential life and career skill, also known as soft skills (Tulgan, 2015). Sarpparaje (2016) proposed that verbal communication is the competence to convey information accurately and as intended through speech.

Assumptions

This research study was based on several assumptions. The initial assumption is that I conducted the investigation free of my biases. I also alleviated my influence on the study's participants as I am the sole researcher responsible for data collection and analysis. The second assumption is that I obtained an ideal and appropriate sample size from the research study population. The third assumption was that the sample participants were honest, unfiltered, and unbiased when answering my interview questions. The students being honest, unfiltered, and bias-free allowed me to make sense from within the

participant's meaning of their experiences. The fourth assumption is that the participants

participated freely and openly in the research study with no ulterior motives. The final

assumption is that I used inductive reasoning in the analysis phase of my research study. I

used the process of recognizing and observing patterns in the data and drew a conclusion

from those patterns. I had not used the data from my research study to prove a self-

fulfilling prophecy.

Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) framed assumptions in a qualitative

research study into interpretive frameworks. Interpretive frameworks are a set of beliefs

that channel action. Based on Creswell and Poth's (2018) interpretive framework

category listing, the study was social constructivism, where I explored and analyzed the

meaning given to the world we live in today. Open-ended questions, which are general

and broad, were asked. The focus remained on the 'processes' of interaction and the

historical and cultural setting of the participants. Finally, I acknowledged that the

participant's background and culture would shape their interpretation and meaning.

Scope and Delimitations

Multiple research studies recognized the influence theatre possesses in a learning

environment (Allen & Laine, 2018; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; López & Jiménez,

2018; Neilson & Reeves, 2019). There were also research studies on the use of acting,

roleplay, and simulation to teach students effective ways to communicate (Chan & Watts,

2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Sebold et al., 2018). However, I

found no recent research studies that existed and investigated the first-hand accounts of

undergraduate students, in a liberal arts university, who had taken a beginning acting

class. Moreover, there are no recent research studies that existed of undergraduate

students' perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment. This study took place in a higher education institution.

The scope of this research study is in a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. The research study explored and examined the perceptions of undergraduate students who are enrolled in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played in the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment. The participants of the study were undergraduate students who had taken a beginning acting course at the same liberal arts university. The maximum student enrollment for the class was 20 students. There are no pre-requisite courses needed to take the acting class. Delimitation in my study would be my research study's objective, which investigated and only included the perceptions on how the undergraduate students made meaning of the influence a beginning acting class played in the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment.

The readers of my research will determine the transferability of my study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) proposed that it is essential that a researcher employs rich, thick descriptions to not only describe the behavior and experiences but also describing their context as well to assist in facilitating the transferability judgment of readers. To obtain a rich, thick description, my method of data collection included face-to-face interviews (in-depth with two interviews per participant), a focus group discussion (with all sample participants), and document analysis (field notes, daily data log, and course syllabus).

Limitations

Qualitative inquiry is a study of naturally occurring phenomena requiring a researcher's interpretive and inductive analysis (Mayan, 2009). Qualitative inquiry is also subjective in approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). Moreover, the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research. As the primary instrument and researcher in my study, I interpreted and made sense of the meaning the study's participants attached to their experiences in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played in their verbal communication skills development. The primary limitation of my research was that I would be aware of any of my biases before the interpretation and analysis of my study (Maxwell, 2013). As I was the sole researcher in the collection and analyzing processes, my research lens and findings were subjective and completely bias-free.

As a current instructor of theatrical design and technical direction and someone who has been involved with theatre for over 30 years, I consider myself a product of theatre. In reflection, as I nurtured throughout life, the theatre has always been an essential part of my development process. I can not disregard my identity, background, culture, beliefs, and perceptual lens, which I brought with me to the research study. Therefore, I approached the research process with complete transparency of who I am, my love of the theatre, and, more importantly, my belief in its efficacy. Employing a research journal allowed me to take notes, daily, throughout the research process and then reflect on the notes to determine any bias. Most importantly, during data analysis, I asked two theatre scholars to peer review my interpretations and analysis of the data.

Objectivity is the strength of scientific research (Patton, 2015). Just as important, Patton (2015) asserted, "Feelings are the enemy of rationality and objectivity. Emotions and feelings lead to caring---and caring is a primary source of bias" (p. 58). Throughout my experience in theatre, I have always heard or been told that theatre people are emotional in nature. Although I do consider myself to be a sensitive person, I remained rational and independent throughout the research study.

Yin (2016) advocated that a researcher must identify biases that may likely influence the study's findings. I employed the use of keeping a journal, throughout my research study, to contain and control my preferences. A research journal was utilized to write everything down to keep a record of the research process; from my thoughts to interview session notes, and data analysis reflections (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The use of a journal would also allow me to keep organized throughout the research process. As a novice researcher, the journal permitted me to write down questions and concerns to ask my dissertation committee. Finally, the researcher's journal provided me with a way to keep on track and schedule.

Significance

This research study added to the body of research on the development of a student's verbal communication skills during their undergraduate school years. The development of a student's verbal communication skills contributes to the development of their soft skills which employers are seeking in their higher education recruits. Soft skills are an individual's character traits and non-technical skills; such as people skills, conflict resolution skills, verbal communication skills, teamwork skills, and self-awareness. Soft skills are essential not only in the workplace but in everyday life, as well.

The soft skills gap is growing in today's employment environments (Tulgan, 2015). The findings of this research study may also benefit students, across educational disciplines, in the potential development of their soft skills; precisely, their verbal communication skills. Oral communication is essential and vital in all human interactions.

John Dewey's philosophical writings are presented through the lenses of humanism and pragmatism. He proposed a link between education and democracy. Dewey (1938) posited that the purpose of education was to prepare students to become contributing citizens in society. Education was the tool that cultivated a student's knowledge and skills. A student who advanced their cognition and abilities were more apt to assume societal responsibilities in the future and become successful and productive members of their society (Dewey, 1938). Liberal arts higher education institutions need to focus on the development of a student's cognitive and work skills during their undergraduate learning process. The development of a student's verbal communication skills is essential to their potential future employment. Professional development courses and communication courses should not be the only choices for communication skills development. A basic acting class may provide students additional opportunities to foster their verbal communication skills. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns. Positive social change may come from students who successfully build their verbal communication skills, during their collegiate years, find employment after graduation, and become a

contributing member in their community (Anatolievna, Munirovna, Kasimovna, Mirzayanovna, & Anatolievna, 2017).

Summary

The Association of American Colleges & Universities states that the overall purpose of higher education is the preparation for job employment in today's global society (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2018b). The ability to verbally communicate clearly and effectively is essential and vital in all work environments. A problem exists with the current graduates, from colleges and universities, who are faced with the challenge of not owning the proper verbal communication skills required in the 21st-century job market. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. This research study explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment.

There were limited studies in developing job skills through theater studies; though researchers and scholars had well documented the importance of theatre and arts in learning and education (Bell, 2016; Greene et al., 2018; Ivory et al., 2016; Li, 2017; McKinney et al., 2018). Moreover, little research existed on teaching effective communication skills through a theatre class offered in higher education institutions. Likewise, little research existed on the pedagogical value of an acting class in developing an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills in a higher education liberal arts institution. This research study explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate

student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the development of their verbal communication skills. This study also contributed to the current literature and, more importantly, helped to fill the gap in the literature.

Chapter 2 is an exhaustive exposition of the review of the literature related to this research study. Scholarly writing and studies are presented that inform this research. The strategies employed to assist in search of the literature will be discussed. Finally, a discussion on how this research study would fill the gap in the literature that currently exists on the research topic will be offered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. The phenomenon of interest was the undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played in their verbal communication skills development.

The Association of American Colleges & Universities (2018b) states the primary purpose of higher education is the preparation for employment in today's global society. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is essential in all work environments. However, a problem exists with the current college and university graduates lacking the proper verbal communication skills required in the 21st-century job market (The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 2018).

Higher education institutions offer undergraduate students professional development courses and communication courses as options for verbal communication skills development. However, the outcomes from these options are not producing the soft skills that potential employers are seeking in higher education graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019; Stewart et al., 2016; Tang, 2019). Additional course options may be needed, at liberal arts higher

education institutions, for students to choose from to develop their job skills for future

employment (Clokie & Fourie, 2016; Pierce, 2019).

Researchers have recognized the influence theatre/acting possesses in a learning

environment. Studies on theatre as a pedagogical tool are documented in all the learning

stages of education (Bhatia, & Pathak, 2019; Clarke et al., 2017; López & Jiménez, 2018;

Ulubey, 2018). The use of theatre/acting as a teaching strategy is also effective and

common in professional learning institutions. Healthcare education utilizes

simulation/roleplay to teach their students effective ways to communicate (Chan &

Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson, & Reeves,

2019). However, I did not uncover any research that connects these three threads (theatre

or acting, communication skills, experiential learning) together within a field of higher

education.

Scholars have examined the connection of acting in theatre to cognitive and

educational benefits (Greene et al., 2018). In arts education, researchers have explored

the effects of disciplinary literacies in drama in higher education (Bell, 2016; Kornetsky,

2017; Szasz, 2017). Researchers have also documented the role of acting as a strategy in

enhancing the development of communication skills (Dickinson et al., 2016; Hoffmann-

Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson, & Reeves, 2019). Additionally, many researchers have

studied the connection between the art of acting and postgraduate education; especially in

healthcare education such as medical and nursing schools. Simulation/roleplay was not

only an effective strategy to develop healthcare students' communication skills, but it

also enhanced the realism of real-life clinical situations for the students (Barron et al.,

2017; Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Hart & Chilcote, 2016; Hoffmann-

Longtin et al., 2018). Moreover, researchers agreed that experiential learning promotes the development of life-skills, including verbal communication skills (Bradberry, & De Maio, 2019; Duncan et al., 2017; Fede et al., 2018). In higher education environments, improving oral communication skills through experiential learning experiences has also been the subject of researchers' studies (Duncan et al., 2017; Sang Joon et al., 2018; Tabak, & Lebron, 2017). However, little research existed on the development of verbal communication skills in an experiential learning theatre environment in higher education. This research study explored the perceived influence of an acting class on the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills for future employment. The results of the study helped fill the gap in the research literature on the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills in an experiential learning theatre classroom in higher education institutions. Moreover, there is an increase in the gap between higher education graduate's soft skills ability and employer's expectations of higher education graduate's soft skills ability (Stewart et al., 2016).

In Chapter 2, I will present the evolution of scholarly research, from the past five years, along with earlier research that still bears significance to experiential learning, theatre pedagogy, and communication skills development. The chapter will be divided into multiple sections. The first section will be a description of the literature search strategy used to find literature sources in the Walden Library. The conceptual framework will follow the literature search strategy and will assume the foundation for the study. The following components of Chapter 2 will be the review of the literature, which will include the following sections: Literature Review related to Key Variables and Review of

Literature on Methodologies. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a section of summary and conclusions.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University library was the primary source in my literature search process. The first search tool that I utilized at the Walden library was Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Thoreau is a search engine that explores the multiple databases that are in the Walden library. The downside to using Thoreau is that it does not search every single database in the Walden library. Thus, a second mining search was employed using the following databases: Education Source, Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Central, and Academic Search Complete. My prior knowledge and experience with Theatre as a pedagogical tool helped me identify the following list of keywords used in both searches to explore the Walden databases. In mining the literature, the key search terms included: *acting, arts integration, colleges & universities, communication, communication accommodation theory, communication skills, creative drama, David A. Kolb, drama, drama-based pedagogy, education, effective communication, experiential learning, forum theater, higher education, improvisation, improvisational theater, interactive theater, interpersonal communication*, *presentation skills, roleplay, simulation, theater, theatre, theater in education*, *theatre pedagogy,* and *verbal communication.*

Multiple database searches were employed using a combination of at least two or three keywords from the above list of key search terms. Additionally, the limiters utilized during the searches were articles no older than five years of publication and peer-reviewed articles. An alert, created on Google Scholar, provided me with updates on the

most current literature and studies on the research topics. The number of peer-reviewed articles and studies retrieved from the combination of all the quests, including alerts on Google Scholar, totaled over 150. The scale of the key search terms, the saturation of discovered peer-reviewed articles and studies, along with the number of databases investigated renders me to conclude that the literature review is exhaustive of potential research appropriate for my research.

<div align="center">**Conceptual Foundation**</div>

The conceptual foundation for this research study was Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Art of Acting. These foundational concepts would ground and inform the research. Additionally, it was essential to recognize that two elements of the art of acting are the concepts of improvisation and roleplay/simulation.

In this chapter, my personal experiences on Theatre as a pedagogical tool would also guide and expound on these theories. The literature review was presented and viewed through an educational lens. The literature review also included an elaboration on how researchers had built their studies on these theories. Depth and analysis will also be provided on how Experiential Learning, Communication Accommodation Theory, Theatre, Acting, Improvisation, Roleplay/simulation influence the development of communication skills.

Experiential Learning

Learning is a process of developing knowledge through experience (Kolb, 2015). Experiential Learning emphasizes the process of learning rather than the outcomes of education (Kolb et al., 2014; Tomkins & Ulus, 2016; van Rensburg, Botma, Heyns, &

Coetzee, 2018; Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). Experiential learning is applying the theory

and content of academia to real-world contexts (Cyphert, Dodge, & Duclos, 2016; Fede

et al., 2018; Kim, 2019; Maguire, 2018). Experiential learning connects the gap between

theory and practice. Experiential learning also contributes to developing skills for life-

long learning (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Duncan et al., 2017; Raja & Najmonnisal,

2018; Skinner, Hyde, McPherson, & Simpson, 2016). More importantly, perception,

cognition, behavior, and experience are all woven into the fabric of experiential learning

(Kolb, 2015).

The earlier intellectual works of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget played

a significant influence on Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015). The

Experiential Learning Theory has its foundation in the earlier works of Dewey, Lewin,

and Piaget's theories of human learning and development. More importantly, experience

plays a central role in the three scholars' theories. Kolb (2015) describes Dewey's

tradition of experiential learning as coming from a philosophical pragmatist perspective,

Lewin's from a Gestalt psychology perspective, and Piaget from a rationalist perspective.

Before I analyze Kolb and his theory of Experiential Learning, I will present a brief

background history on the theorists who played an essential role in the development of

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory: John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget.

John Dewey. Experiential learning can be traced back to the works of John

Dewey in the early 20th century (Kolb, 2015). Dewey's theory is based on the philosophy

of pragmatism. His view of progressive education underlines learning by doing (Kolb,

1984). Dewey put forward the belief that life experience is essential in progressive

education. Moreover, Dewey (1938) proposed the dual purpose for education, based on

experience, is for students and society (Dewey, 1938). Learning information involves the student's experience; thus, the primary responsibility of educators is to guide and engage students to employ their past experiences, in the learning process, to create new ideas for the future (Dewey, 1938). In summation, Dewey (1938) concluded, "the subject-matter of education consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore, the chief business of the school is to transmit them to the new generation" (p. 5). Thus, also stating his belief on the purpose of education. In a peer-reviewed essay, Gordon (2016) explained why scholars keep coming back to John Dewey for inspiration and insights on learning and education. Gordon (2016) also concluded that Dewey's ideas on education and learning are still relevant today and have indeed passed the test of time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Dewey (1938) offered a philosophy of experience in which he argued that education and learning could not exist without each other. Moreover, Dewey proposed that progressive education provides freedom to students in the learning process. Thus, to enhance the learning atmosphere, Gordon (2016) reminds educators always to maintain an effective constructivist learning environment; one where there is a balance between teacher and student learning. A constructivist learning environment encompasses the complexities of the real world, emphasizes knowledge creation in real-world settings, and most importantly, encourages reflection on experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Scholars, in the field of education, are most in agreement that John Dewey's Theory of Education is the most influenced learning theory applied to education today (Garrido, Hernández-León, Figueroa-Sandoval, & Aillon-Newman, 2018; Grierson, 2017; Kalkbrenner & Horton-Parker, 2016; Pascucci, 2016). Dewey's education theory,

with its constructivist underpinnings, changed the way contemporary educators and students approached learning (Garrido et al., 2018; Ilica, 2016; Kolb, 2015). Pedagogy became linked to experience, and more importantly, the experience became knowledge (Kolb, 2015). In describing Dewey's importance to the field of education, Ilica (2016) stated, "The essence of his theory aims the harmonization between individual nature and social culture as the core of educational acts and process of growth and development" (p. 12).

      Kurt Lewin. One of the founders of experiential learning is Kurt Lewin (Kolb, 1984). He is also the originator of Action Research developed in the 1940s (Adelman, 1993). The foundation for Action Research is self-reflection. Participants in a group undertake a self-reflective inquiry to acquire improvement in their practices (Lewin & Gold, 1999a). Participants work in a collaborative method of examination and critique with their experience as the guiding force. Action Research is a process of collecting information that precedes social change or as Lewin described it, social management (Lewin & Gold, 1999b). A T-group (T = training) is a learning laboratory. Members participate in sessions to explore and learn from one another (Lewin, 1997). Lewin's T-group research in the 1940s proposed that learning from experience is fundamental for individual and corporate efficacy; thus, the initial foundation for Lewin's Action Research was established (Kolb, 2015). In the 1980s, Lewin's Action Research model influenced David A. Kolb's learning cycle and helped shape Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Kolb, 2015). Kurt Lewin's considerable influence on many models prompted Huarng and Mas-Tur (2016) to acknowledge him as the "father of social changes" (p. 4725). Inspired by Kurt Lewin's contribution to social change, the Journal

of Business Research honored his scholarly works with an honorary issue (Burnes, & Bargal, 2017). The issue contained 75 papers, on Kurt Lewin, that were presented at the 6th Conference of the Global Innovation and Knowledge Academy in Valencia, Spain in March of 2016 (Burnes, & Bargal, 2017). The honorary issue intended to provide theoretical and empirical support to Lewin's change model through different perspectives. Lewin's change model influenced action research, activity theory, conflict resolution, organizational development, and experiential learning (Huarng, & Mas-Tur, 2016).

  Jean Piaget. The theory of cognitive development is often associated with the works of Jean Piaget (Kolb, 2015). The theory focused on a child's perception of cognitive development through the influence of their biological maturation and cultural environment (Carey, Zaitchik, & Bascandziev, 2015). A child constructs a mental model of the world through development stages. Piaget proposed four stages of development which included: sensorimotor (from ages 0 to 2); preoperational (from ages 2 to 7); concrete operational (from ages 7 to 11); and formal operational (from ages 12 and up) (Barrouillet, 2015). Piaget focused on "thinking." What is the relationship between the development of "thinking" and the development of child? Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory posited that knowledge is actively constructed by children through the exploration and manipulation of their environment (Piaget, 2002).

  Kolb (2015) acknowledged, "Stated most simply, Piaget's theory describes how intelligence is shaped by experience" (p. 12). Intelligence arises through the interaction of the individual and their natural environment or surroundings (Kolb, 2015). Piaget proposed that a child's brain develops as they grow older and nurtures through four

distinct thought-processing stages (Piaget, & Inhelder, 1969). Piaget focused on the

children's learning process rather than the outcomes. Piaget also suggested that children

play an active role in their learning through observation, interaction, and accommodation

(Piaget, 2002).

Piaget's research flourished throughout the late 1920s to the 1940s (Barrouillet,

2015). However, he did not receive recognition until the 1960s (Kolb, 2015). In 1974, the

first Jean Piaget Conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland and in 2014, the most

prominent and influential developmental psychologists were invited to the Jean Piaget

Conference to discuss the cognitive developmental psychology changes in the last four

decades (Barrouillet, 2015).

David A. Kolb. As mentioned earlier, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

builds on the scholarly works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Kolb has incorporated these

scholar's works into an experiential learning theory that is suited for the twenty-first

century (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Kolb (2015) defined experiential learning as a primary

source of learning that emphasizes direct sense impression through experience. The

Experiential Learning Theory is a process of developing knowledge through the

transformation of an individual's experience (Kolb, 2015). The experiential learning

model's perspective links together with an individual's personal, work, and education

development (Kolb, 1984). The word "experiential" attaches the theory to the scholarly

works of Dewy, Lewin, and Piaget; while at the same time emphasizing that learning and

development are grounded in experience (Kolb, 2015).

The foundation of Experiential learning lies in its links to the humanistic and

constructivist perspective (Kolb, 2015). Experiential learning emerges when new

experiences are followed by reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential Learning is a four-stage cyclical model (Figure 1).
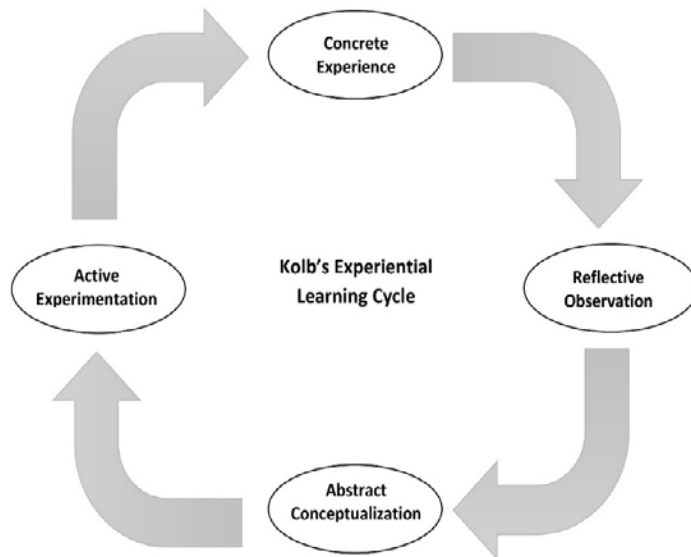
Figure 1. The Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (p. 51), by D. A. Kolb, 2015, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., New York, New York.

The Experiential Learning Cycle begins with the Concrete Experience stage where the learner encounters a new experience. After engaging with the new experience, the learner enters the second stage, Reflective Observation, and reviews and reflects on the new experience. Through reflection, the learner enters the third stage, Abstract Conceptualization, at which point the learner creates and analyzes a new idea and learns from the experience. The final stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is Active Experimentation. This stage occurs after the learner has had time to reflect and critically analyze the new experience. The learner then attempts what they have learned and applies the new knowledge to new incoming experiences. The learner needs to complete all four

stages of the cycle to be successful in the learning process. No one stage can stand alone as a learning process (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb and Kolb (2018) suggested that educators encompass experiential learning methods as an effective pedagogical tool. With that in mind, Kolb and Kolb (2018) also proposed the following foundational perspectives on the Experiential Learning Theory to support an educator's teaching methods:

1. Learning is an endlessly recurring cycle not a linear process
2. Experiencing is necessary for learning
3. The brain is built for experiential learning
4. The dialectic poles of the cycle are what motivate learning
5. Learning styles are different ways of going around the learning cycle
6. Full cycle learning increases learning flexibility and development
7. Teaching around the learning cycle
8. The learning cycle can be a rubric for holistic, authentic assessment (p. 8).

Experiential learning aligns with the constructivist theory of learning where learning outcomes vary and are uncertain. Learners are the beholders of their education through their reflection of the learning process, and not, in terms of results. Kolb's experiential learning is commonly used in today's field of education (Mercer et al., 2017; Munge et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2018). In experiential learning, it is the student's responsibility to take the initiative, make decisions and be accountable for their learning outcomes (Helmefalk & Eklund, 2018).

Communication Accommodation Theory

Howard Giles developed the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) at the University of California in 1971. Giles (2008) stated that the evolution of CAT was in response to observations of his own changes in speech styles during communication exchanges. CAT posits that everyone modifies their way of speaking with whomever

they are communicating with (Giles, 2016). The initial phase of the theory began with the observations of people interacting with each other and shifting their dialects or languages throughout the conversation. The role of speech accommodation was an essential part of the successful outcome of the observed conversation (Giles, 2016). Giles (2016) proposed that the two elements of CAT, convergence and divergence, emerged from the way individuals accommodate (convergence) or do not accommodate (divergence) when communicating with another individual. The acts of convergence and divergence during the communication process reflect the individual's personality, rank, social identity, temperament, and relationship; thus, CAT helps us explain each person's unique communication process and style (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). Moreover, CAT is a process that reduces communicative differences with speakers in everyday conversation.

Accommodation practices are dependent on an individual's social identity and their personal individuality. There are two constructs of CAT that permit these accommodation behaviors, convergence and divergence. Convergence is defined as matching our speaking manner with the vocal style of those we are in conversation (Giles, 2016). The adjustment of our speaking method when in conversation is selective (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). An individual may adjust their communication manner through convergence to connect with the person they are communicating with and to reduce social differences (Giles, 2016). An individual's culture and norms guide the accommodation process during convergence (Gasiorek, 2016). Convergence also influences the tempo of an individual's speaking manner when in conversation to emphasize caring and empathy in the communication process (Giles, 2016). Examples of using a convergence approach in communication include conversations with individuals

who speak a different language and intergenerational conversations (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Convergence communication strategies may include adopting the sounds and cadence of the other person in a conversation, talking in layman's terms, utilizing discourse management, and satisfying emotional needs throughout the conversation (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

The other communication behavior is divergence, which is a non-accommodation speaking manner that is subjective to the communicational need of a conversation and highlights the linguistic differences between both speakers (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). Giles (2016) proposed that divergence does not warrant any effort nor need to make communication any smoother or reduce social differences. Individuals practice divergence when communicating to demonstrate and maintain their social identity. Examples of using a divergence approach in communication include parent-children and teacher-student conversations (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Divergence communication in the workplace demonstrates superiority or hierarchy of roles by maintaining distance, through communication style and manners, between employers and employees (Gasiorek, 2016). Divergence communication strategies may include accentuating the difference between the speaker and the individual throughout the conversation, maintaining their cultural identity, and upholding their social identity and distance (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

One of the aims of CAT is to advance communication practices in interpersonal and intergroup exchanges that are evidence-based (Giles, 2008). CAT is deemed a subjective communication accommodation (Giles, 2008). Researchers have employed CAT as a conceptual framework for research in education (Chevalier, Watson, Barras, & Cottrell, 2017; Chevalier, Watson, Barras, Cottrell, & Angus, 2018; Gasiorek & Vincze,

2016), healthcare (Jones, Sheeran, Lanyon, Evans, & Martincovic, 2018; Kilgour, Bogossian, Callaway, & Gallois, 2019), and communication (Fang, 2017; Denes, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2016).

Acting in Theatre

Theatre has often been referred to as a vehicle to imitate life (Levy, 2005). Scholars have well-documented theatre/acting as an effective pedagogical tool in all the learning stages of education (Allen & Laine, 2018; Gray et al., 2018; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; López & Jiménez, 2018; Miles, 2018). Extensive studies have shown that theatre/acting not only teaches life skills (confidence, verbal communication, time management, teamwork, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, a sense of community), but also influences all aspects of an individual's life (Allen & Laine, 2018; Bell, 2016; Ivory et al., 2016; Mareneck, 2018). Moreover, Theatre programs in liberal arts colleges and universities train their students for the profession instead of teaching them for education (Fliotsos & Medford, 2009). Nonetheless, theatre/acting does hold power to teach, and more importantly, theatre/acting explores the imagination and creativity of every individual it encounters (Allen & Laine, 2018).

Improvisation. There are various forms of improvisation (Frost & Yarrow, 2016). I will focus on theatrical improvisation for this study. In my own experience, I have found that beginning acting classes recognize Viola Spolin as the "mother" of theatrical improvisation. Frost and Yarrow (2016) describe Spolin as a pioneer and originator of improvisational games. Improvisation is commonly used as a theatre training exercise (Frost & Yarrow, 2016). Actors often use improvisation as a warm-up exercise before their performances.

Spolin (n.d.) categorizes improvisation as a system of actor training that has its methodology foundation in improvisational games. These games can also be classified as problem-solving exercises. A significant characteristic of improvisation is that of "give and take" activity (Spolin, 1999).

There are many definitions of improvisation. Frost and Yarrow (2016) define theatrical improvisation as

> the skill of using bodies, space, imagination, objects and all human resources to generate or to reformulate a coherent physical expression of an idea, a situation and a character (even, perhaps, a text); to do this spontaneously, in response to the immediate stimuli of one's environment, without preconceptions (Frost & Yarrow, 2016, p. xv).

In a peer-reviewed article, Barker (2016) proposed that improvisational theatre, like most theatre forms, is a collaborative art; however, improvisational theatre is unscripted and guided by a set of principles. Spolin (1999) suggested that theatrical improvisation is the blending of spontaneity with creativity. More importantly, as improvisation is presented without any sort of scripted preparation, the success of the process is dependent on the participant's timing (spontaneity) and reactions (creativity).

Trust, presence, and acceptance are the three basic rules that guide improvisation (Spolin, 1999). These basic rules provide the participants of improvisation the overarching framework that guides the spontaneous actions (Yamamoto, 2017). However, Spolin (1999) clearly states that each improvisational game has its own set of rules in addition to the basic rules. All these rules may limit the actor, but they also advance the creative environment and setting of improvisation (Yamamoto, 2017).

Benjamin and Kline (2019) proposed the following principles of improvisation in their mixed methods research study: Must Agree; Yes-And; Make Statements; There Are No Mistakes. Firstly, participants must learn to respect their improvisation partner and what they have created; thus, participants must agree and say "yes." Once participants learn to agree and say "yes," they contribute to the improvisation process by saying "Yes-and." Yes-and supports the participant's partner and is the impetus for creativity and innovation. Most importantly, Yes-and is often viewed as the guiding tenet of improvisation (Yamamoto, 2017). When answering to Yes-and in the improvisation process, reply with a statement, and not an apologetic question. The spontaneity of improvisation requires the participants not to ask questions, but rather, set a direction or path for others to follow. Finally, there are no mistakes in improvisation only opportunities. Benjamin and Kline stated, "This allows for a space where participants learn how to manage change and respond decisively to unanticipated challenges. Thus, improv is about moving forward in order to create something novel and unexpected" (p. 132).

Improvisation is a powerful tool in connecting people and building relationships (Okten & Griffin, 2016). Thus, improvisation is employed as a pedagogical tool in many disciplines (Benjamin & Kline, 2019; Mæland & Espeland, 2017; Okten & Griffin, 2016; Piccoli, 2018; Romanelli, Tishby, & Moran, 2017). Benjamin and Kline (2019) recognized improvisation as a training technique to enhance interpersonal skills. More importantly, improvisation assists its participants to not only work collaboratively, but to communicate effectively (Frost, & Yarrow, 2016).

Roleplay/Simulation. In defining the actor's role, Brockett and Ball (2011)

stated, "The actor's function is to embody characters that otherwise exist only in the written word and the imagination. What the performers say and do and the way they interact with each other and their surroundings creates a play's action" (p. 345). Brockett and Ball (2011) describe acting as an extension of an individual's regular action and behavior. They suggested that individuals live in a world where there is daily communication, interaction, and movement between one another. The authors also proposed that an individual portrays many roles throughout the day, just as an actor plays many roles throughout their career. Successful careers in acting are attributed not only to talent but also to training. Acting is a skill that requires regular preparation and rehearsal.

Roleplay is an educational technique in which people spontaneously act-out problems of human relations and analyze the enactment with the help of other role players and observers. Roleplay is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment.

Dickinson et al. (2016) defined simulation as the application of acting and roleplay as simulation methods. In the Theatre discipline, roleplay is an acting technique that allows an actor to transform themselves into a character using scripted words (Hagen, 1973). Theater and acting methodology can provide simulation educators a framework from which to establish an acting convention specific to the discipline of healthcare simulation (Dickinson et al., 2016). Sebold et al. (2018) also suggested that roleplaying is considered a clinical simulation approach to learning in the healthcare field.

Roleplay or simulation-based learning is an acting technique that is effective in

developing cognitive and interpersonal skills (Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017). Roleplay/simulation also encourages creativity and stimulates imagination (Heinrich, 2017). Resembling improvisation, roleplay/simulation enhances the development of oral communication skills and listening skills (Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017). Heinrich (2017) proposed that roleplay/simulation encourages creativity and stimulates the imagination.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

The key variables related to the literature review for this study are experiential learning and its relationship with higher education, communication, improvisation, and roleplay/simulation. Another key variable related to the literature review is the Communication Accommodation Theory. All these key variables in the literature review will be explored in detail in this section.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is a philosophy of education (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory has its foundation in Dewey's Theory of Experience, where experience plays a leading role in an individual's learning and development. However, experiential learning is not a process or technique to afford learners with experience so they can learn; nor is it a recording of experiences to learn from (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory is based on the following propositions: learning is a process and not found by outcomes; learning is re-learning; learning is a process of adaption to the world; synergy must exist between the learner and their environment; and learning is a process of creating knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) defines learning as the development of knowledge through the transformation of an individual's experience.

Ambrose and Poklop (2015) conducted a longitudinal study at Northeastern University focusing on the question, "Do students really learn from experience?" The emphasis of the phenomenological research study was to investigate co-op learning from the perspective of the students. The co-op learning program is often termed the earn-learn-earn-learn model; students learn and work consecutively throughout their undergraduate years (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015). The researchers interviewed 104 study participants who were part of the co-op education program from one to three periods of employment. A stratified purposeful sample was employed to select the study's participants. A standardized, semi-structured interview protocol was used for data collection. Analysis of the collected data revealed that the co-op education program extends and supplements the university's academic curriculum. The co-op employment extends the curriculum by transferring and integrating the coursework knowledge into real-world contexts through experiential learning. Ambrose and Poklop (2015) concluded that students do learn from experience. Moreover, the authors proposed the positive benefits of co-op education include providing students with the opportunity to learn and grow from each other through experience, reflection, generalization, and application, all important aspects of experiential learning.

Similarly, Moylan, Gallagher, and Heagney (2016) conducted a qualitative study examining the role of experiential learning in entrepreneurship education. The authors proposed that experiential learning is best enabled when learners are active participants in the learning process. The learner's active participation in the learning process will lead to the creation of experiences and more importantly, a period of reflection to follow on those experiences. Findings from the study suggested that experiential learning

opportunities afforded to students provide educators a learning environment that promotes entrepreneurial capabilities in the students.

In addition to providing capabilities in students of entrepreneurship education, experiential learning may also influence a student's confidence levels. Banach, Foden, and Brooks Carter (2019) conducted a grounded theory qualitative study to examine how experiential learning influenced the confidence of undergraduate social work students in a group environment. Social work students participated in an eight-week social work practice class that focused on group work and community organization. Students in the practice class rotated on being the co-facilitator in the group work sessions. The results of the pre-post survey discovered that there was an increase in the confidence of the student's ability to facilitate groups. Another element that showed a rise in confidence level was the student's group work skills. Themes that emerged from the study included "doing," "participating as a group member," "acting as a group facilitator," and "receiving feedback" (Banach et al., 2019). The authors proposed that limitations of the study include the size of the sample, the self-perceptions of the students, and the limited diversity of the sample population. Banach et al. (2019) concluded that the study supports the observations and findings of Humphrey (2014). The study also promotes experiential learning as a valuable method of teaching about group/team-work. The authors also emphasized the importance of "doing" as a means of education. Most importantly, the findings of the study continue to provide evidence of the positive benefits of experiential learning for student skill development.

One of the challenges instructors face in education is transforming students from passive recipients of knowledge into active learners (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). As

the advisers of two experiential programs at a State University on the west coast,

Bradberry and De Maio (2019) have observed the positive influence of experiential

learning and simulations on 3rd and 4th-year students at the university. The authors have

witnessed students apply knowledge from classwork to real-world situations; in addition

to developing their communication skills and other soft skills required in a variety of

careers. Bradberry and De Maio (2019) also asserted that practical experience provides

students a higher level of confidence, and students learn the skills that are harder to teach

in a classroom.

Bradberry and De Maio (2019) conducted a mixed methods research study on the

long-term effect of experiential learning programs on student success. The survey

consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions that were sent to former

students of the two experiential learning programs that the authors advised. The study

was designed to gather data from students who had participated in either of the two

experiential learning programs; thus, the study did not have a control group for

comparison. The authors asserted that there is no causal relationship between former

students in either of the two experiential learning programs. Moreover, there is also no

causal relationship in the author's measures of student success. Bradberry and De Maio

(2019) emphasized that the survey data does support evidence that participation in an

experiential learning program is correlated with significant gains in the likelihood of

long-term student success.

Experiential Learning and Higher Education

Higher education institutions are acknowledging the advantages of experiential

learning and are supporting experiential learning as a compelling pedagogy where

students are an active participant in the learning process and take ownership of their

education (Andres, 2019; Helmefalk & Eklund, 2018; Hien & Oanh, 2018; Kim, 2019;

Maguire, 2018; Raja & Najmonnisal, 2018; van Rensburg et al., 2018). Students, in

higher education institutions, note an increase in learning motivation when they are in an

experiential learning environment. Students are also embracing the learning experience in

a real-world context (Hien & Oanh, 2018; Kim, 2019; Maguire, 2018; Wurdinger &

Allison, 2017). Experiential learning environments allow the students to explore a topic,

reflect on their experiences with the subject, make connections between their experiences

and with the issue, and finally, generalize and gain more in-depth knowledge of the topic

(Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Faculty members, in higher education institutions, view

experiential learning as a viable alternative to academic, lecture-based learning

(Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). Kolb and Kolb (2005)

proposed that the objective of an experiential learning classroom is to yield a growth-

producing experience. Thus, higher education institutions are now considering the

increasing interest in experiential learning and the positive effects it has on the

development of life skills (Banach et al., 2019; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Wurdinger

& Allison, 2017).

However, higher education institutions, over the past decade, have seen students

enrolled in a four-year baccalaureate program not graduate within six or more years

(Maguire, 2018). Student's changing their course of study is one factor contributing to a

student's inability to complete their degree promptly (Maguire, 2018). In a mixed

methods research study, Maguire (2018) investigated the effect of experiential learning

on first-year Business practicum students. The objectives of the research study included

analyzing a business practicum course's influence on a first-year student's confidence, investigating the student's confidence in their major after participating in the business practicum course, and evaluating whether first-year business student's valued the experience in the practicum group work (Maguire, 2018). Service-learning opportunities for students during their first-year at colleges or universities afford students practical experience working in real-world contexts (Kolb et al., 2014).

Maguire (2018) explored the student's perception of the introduction of a first-year experiential business practicum course and builds on preceding studies that focused on first-year business student's confidence in their chosen educational path. The population of the study was all first-year students in a private university in southwestern New York. Data collection for the research was conducted through pre-course and post-course surveys. The pre-course survey collected quantitative data while the post-course survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Participants were asked to reflect on their experience in the first-year business practicum course in the writing section of the post-course survey (Maguire, 2018).

The study's results discovered a statistically significant difference, in the pre-course and post-course, between the means of the student's confidence in their selection of a major. However, there was no statistically significant difference, in the pre-course and post-course, between the means of the student's understanding of the career options for their major. The qualitative data revealed that "teamwork" was the top-ranking subject mentioned by 100% of the participants (Maguire, 2018). Limitations in the study included the student's self-reporting of the qualitative written reflections during the post-course data collection process. Another limitation of the study is that the findings may

not be generalizable as the survey was conducted in a small university. Maguire (2018) concluded that a first-year business practicum course, which covers various business disciplines, is a useful pedagogical tool for first-year business students. The practicum course affords first-year business students hands-on experience in the business fields of accounting, marketing, management, and operations. Most importantly, the practicum course strengthened the confidence of student's who chose their business major early in their academic journey (Maguire, 2018).

In contrast to exploring student's insights on experiential learning, Wurdinger and Allison (2017) conducted a quantitative study examining higher education faculty's perceptions and use of experiential learning in their courses. The authors employed a Qualtrics survey to collect data for the research. The 18-question survey focused on faculty members' perceptions of experiential learning and the influence it has on the development of undergraduate student's life skills. Participants of the study were 295 higher education faculty members. The results of the survey included the following: 83% of faculty members used student presentations to assist students in communication skills development; 73% provided students with out-of-class experiences; 52% used observations; 50% incorporated field trips in their courses; and 97% believed experiential learning enhanced the development of a student's life skills (Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). Additionally, 90% of faculty members agreed that experiential learning improved an undergraduate student's communication skills (Wurdinger & Allison, 2017).

Wurdinger and Allison (2017) concluded that there is an increased awareness in higher education on the influence that experiential learning has on the development of life skills. Moreover, the authors asserted that with the increasing costs of higher

education, colleges and universities are recognizing that teaching and learning should be as much valued as research and scholarly activity. Thus, higher education institutions are now also accepting the increasing interest in experiential learning and the positive effects it has on the development of life skills (Wurdinger & Allison, 2017).

As higher education institutions acknowledge the rising interest in experiential learning, Raja and Najmonnisal (2018) conducted a quantitative research study to compare traditional learning methods to experiential learning methods in a private-sector university. The objective of the research was to investigate which method teaches and advances business administration student's communication skills. The authors assert that it is essential that business graduates possess appropriate communication skills. The traditional learning methods employed the use of textbooks and lectures in an academic teaching style, while the experiential learning methods employed the use of roleplaying and simulation to have students actively participate in the learning process. Pre-test and post-test of 60 business administration undergraduate students were the data collection tool. The results of the study revealed that experiential learning methods influenced the development of business undergraduate's communication skills more significantly than traditional learning methods (Raja & Najmonnisal, 2018). The authors suggested that higher education stakeholders consider using experiential learning methods in the classrooms.

Higher education stakeholders are considering the increasing interest in experiential learning methods and the positive effects it has on the development of a student's life skills (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). Students are also embracing internships as an opportunity and experience to learn in a real-world context (Raja &

Najmonnisal, 2018). However, many undergraduate students, for financial reasons, cannot afford to be part of an internship program. Students are turning to student worker programs at higher education institutions to assist with the financial costs of higher education (Fede, et al., 2018). The University of Rhode Island offers students employment in a university department, the Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America (HC), whose focus is on community engagement and education. The outreach project, at the university, that affords students this opportunity at HC is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP).

In a mixed study, Fede et al. (2018) examined the effects of a paid, student employment position, at a university department, on a student's academic success, soft skills development, and civic views and manners. The objective of the study was to assess the experiences and outcomes of former work-study students who participated in the SNAP outreach project. The authors hypothesized positioning student workers into society will engage them with clients and real-life problems would produce an outcome of transferable learning. The authors also hypothesized that the work-study experiential learning experience would further develop a student's soft skills. The participants of the student were former student workers who worked at the HC, for one semester, from 2005-2014 (Fede et al., 2018). A survey link was sent to the former student workers, and 79% of them opened the survey link. Of those who opened the survey link, 59 former student workers or 84% of those who opened the link answered all or most of the survey. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative responses. The data collection instrument to measure transferrable skills (soft skills) was a 4-point Likert scale.

Qualitative responses were analyzed separately to explore the experiences of former

student workers at the HC (Fede et al., 2018).

     The results of the survey revealed that former student workers reported growth in

their soft skills including communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills,

and qualitatively credited the growth of these skills to their work in the HC; primarily

when they interacted with clients in the community. The researchers discovered that the

most commonly discussed ability in the qualitative portion of the responses was the

growth of communication skills. Empathy and problem-solving were the second third

most considered response in the survey. The authors uncovered that, in general, former

student workers reported improvement in their transferrable skills, civic engagement, and

community values was influenced by their participation in an experiential learning

environment, the HC. Despite the positive findings in the study, the sample population of

the study was small, and the study investigated a unique student experience. Thus, Fede

et al. (2018) cautioned that no causal link between student responses and their prior

experiences as student workers should be drawn. Another limitation mentioned by the

researchers was response bias as it was noted that the feedback provided was

overwhelmingly positive to all the questions in the survey. However, the authors did

point out that there was one person who responded that they had feelings of being

micromanaged and not being trusted to do a task; thus, one negative response.

     Fede et al. (2018) concluded that the HC student worker program is beneficial for

undergraduates from a variety of academic disciplines. The authors also found that their

study's findings support past research findings that university jobs are valuable for

academic success and soft skills development. Lastly, Fede et al. (2018) proposed that

higher education institutions should consider creating additional experiential learning experiences (internships) through partnerships within the community.

Experiential Learning and Communication

Dewey (1938) proposed that a student who advanced their cognition and abilities were more apt to assume societal responsibilities in the future and become successful and productive members of their society. Liberal arts higher education institutions need to consider focusing on the development of a student's cognitive and work skills during their undergraduate learning process (Banach et al., 2019; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). The development of a student's communication skills during their undergraduate years is essential for potential future employment (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019). More importantly, employers are seeking higher education institution graduates with relevant soft skills and practical communication skills. (Clokie & Fourie, 2016).

In partnership with community colleges, employers are providing additional experiential learning opportunities, such as service learning, to students so they may develop their soft skills in a work environment (Pierce, 2019). There is a rise in student interest in community involvement through service learning; thus, an increase of internship opportunities in higher education institutions (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Cyphert et al., 2016; Duncan et al., 2017; Fede et al., 2018; Reddick, Struve, Mayo, Miller, & Wang, 2018). Internships, also considered service learning, is a process of learning through experience with hands-on contact in the workforce under real-world working environments (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). This experiential learning method

provides individuals with opportunities in a real-life context and employment setting (Duncan et al., 2017).

Reddick et al. (2018) conducted a phenomenological inquiry on engineering field graduate student's experiences in civic engagement. The study focused on graduate student's motivations to become civically engaged. The study also explored how graduate students made meaning of their experience in civic engagement and the influence the civic engagement experience had on the development of their communication skill. Thus, the choice of a phenomenological research approach. The conceptual framework of the study was Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and the Social Exchange Theory. Reddick et al. (2018) emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of experiential learning. Furthermore, the authors proposed that civic engagement through service learning connects a community to the world of academia. Moreover, service learning not only benefits the community and society they serve, but it also provides benefits to the students such as enhancing their soft skills, developing, persistence, connecting with community and culture (Reddick et al., 2018).

The authors concluded that the study discovered how graduate engineering students described their experience in civic engagement and how they found the meaning of their experience by revealing that service learning complemented their academic work and potential careers. More importantly, the graduate students in the study reported an improvement in their communication skills because of service involvement and civic engagement. The study results indicated that students attributed the outreach initiatives, such as speaking at community events, as the cause of the improvement in their

communication skills. Reddick et al. (2018) concluded that civic engagement activities has a positive effect on the development of a student's soft skills.

There were limitations to this phenomenological research study. Reddick et al. (2018) specified that the research design could not be generalized to all graduate students. The authors also pointed out that the sample participants featured few minority graduate students of engineering. For future studies, the authors recommend capturing experiences of the underrepresented population. Lastly, the study evidenced a significant amount of prior community service activities by the study's participants; thus, limiting the transferability of the findings.

Similarly, Barron et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study on experiential learning and its influence on veterinary students' communication confidence. The location of the study was an experiential learning setting with real-life veterinary appointments. Each examination room was equipped with audio and video recording devices, as well, as being equipped with one-way mirrors. An integrated approach to communication skills training was employed by having veterinary students interacting with real clients while being observed (Barron et al., 2017). Student participants in the study completed pre and post-rotation questionnaires to assess confidence levels of their communication skills in the experiential learning setting. Students could view both the audio and video recordings before completing the surveys (Barron et al., 2017). The findings discovered significant improvement in the student's self-confidence level ratings after the experiential learning activity. The increase in the self-confidence of student's communication skills supports the author's suggestion that experiential learning activities continue in veterinary education. Barron et al. (2017) conclude that experiential learning

promotes an integrated learning approach to not only the development of a student's communication skills but to clinical skills training as well.

Similarly, in the health sciences profession, Skinner et al. (2016) investigated experiential small group learning, at a university in Australia, for students to develop their interpersonal and communication skills through practice and feedback. The authors proposed that interpersonal skills include effective communication, active listening, empathy, and professionalism. Moreover, Skinner et al. (2016) emphasized that interpersonal skills are more than just the patient/practitioner relationship; it also includes communication between family members/caregivers and healthcare providers. In physiotherapy, the traditional approaches to teaching are didactic teaching and clinical modeling. Clinical modeling is learning through observation and occurs in practical classes. However, as class time focuses on specific discipline skills, there is limited time for students to practice their interpersonal skills to receive feedback (Skinner et al., 2016). With the introduction of a problem-based learning (PBL) class to the program, students learned in small group tutorial sessions. The small group setting facilitated an experiential-based learning environment and provided formative feedback opportunities for students (Skinner et al., 2016).

Skinner et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative research study at Charles Sturt University (CSU) in regional New South Wales, Australia. The research participants were final year students from a problem-based learning course and final year students from a traditional class. The data collection tool for this research was a modified version of the Preparation for Hospital Practice Questionnaire (PHPQ). The questionnaire surveyed the graduated students across eight domains: interpersonal skills; confidence

and coping, collaboration, patient management, understanding science, prevention, holistic care, and self-directed learning (Skinner et al., 2016). Students responded to the survey on a 6-point Likert scale. The results of the study discovered that both the PBL cohort and the traditional cohort perceived themselves as prepared for physiotherapy practice; however, the PBL cohort felt more confident and better prepared for physiotherapy practice in terms of their communication skills development. Skinner et al. (2016) concluded that although experiential learning methods may further the development of a student's communication skills than a traditional approach, there may be room for improvement. The authors also concluded that there be further integration of PBL into the undergraduate physiotherapy curriculum as the findings from the study reveal the positive effect of experiential learning on a student's interpersonal communication skills (Skinner et al., 2016).

Employers are partnering with higher education institutions to provide internships to students so they may further develop their interpersonal skill (soft skills) in real-work settings (Fede et al., 2018; Pierce, 2019). An internship is a process of learning through experience with hands-on contact in the workforce under real-world working environments (Bradberry, & De Maio, 2019). Internships have its foundation in experiential learning and provide individuals with opportunities to practice their soft skills in a real-life context and employment setting (Duncan et al., 2017).

Duncan et al. (2017) examined the self-perceptions of interns regarding the development of their soft skills (communication, critical thinking, and leadership skills). In today's global job market, employers are seeking higher education graduates with effective soft skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017; National

Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019). Higher education students preparing for future employment after graduation need to consider developing their soft skills during their undergraduate years. Today's internships benefit undergraduate students by providing them with an opportunity to advance their soft skills; at the same time, employers benefit from internships by testing a student's work ethic without having to employ them (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019).

In a quantitative study, Duncan et al. (2017) explored and analyzed how animal health students made meaning of their experiences in an animal health internship program and the influence the internship played in the development of their soft skills. The soft skills attribute that the authors focused on were communication, critical thinking, and leadership. The data collection instrument was comprised of two surveys, the University of Florida-Engagement, Cogitative Maturity, Innovativeness (UF-EMI) assessment and the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) assessment (Duncan et al., 2017). The quantitative survey was distributed to the animal health interns at the end of the internship. Students responded to the survey, with two columns, on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). Responses, in column one, are based on the intern's level of agreement as they reflect to the first day of the internship. Responses, in column two, are based on the intern's level of agreement on the last day of the internship. The findings of the study revealed that the self-perceptions of the interns regarding their soft skills, pre-internship, were lower in confidence levels than post-internship results. More importantly, Duncan et al. (2017) concluded that there was a definite difference between pre- and post-internship responses and that the findings do indicate a positive influence of

internships on a student's soft skills development. The authors also recommended that future studies include qualitative measures in the data collection instrument to determine the influence the internships had on a student's perceived communication, critical thinking and leadership skills (Duncan et al., 2017).

Experiential Learning and Improvisation

Improvisation is a powerful tool in connecting people and building relationships (Okten, & Griffin, 2016). Thus, improvisation is employed as a pedagogical tool in many disciplines (Benjamin, & Kline, 2019; Mæland, & Espeland, 2017; Okten, & Griffin, 2016; Piccoli, 2018; Romanelli et al., 2017). In describing the impact of improvisation, Benjamin and Kline (2019) stated, "Improvisation has, as a result, long been recognized as useful means of promoting spontaneity, intuition, empathetic listening, nonverbal communication, ad-libbing, roleplaying, risk-taking, team building, creativity, and critical thinking" (p. 130). The authors also suggested that improvisation advances the participant's communication, listening, and collaboration skills. However, improvisation requires a learned skill set where participants excel in spontaneity and creativity (Yamamoto, 2017).

Benjamin and Kline (2019) conducted a mixed-methods research study on the influence of improvisation on an individual's communication, listening, and collaboration skills. The theoretical framework for the study was Self-Efficacy Theory. The study's location was an academic conference for both faculty and graduate students in Tourism and Hospitality education. The participants of the conference took part in an improvisational workshop. Data collection was accomplished with a survey instrument, consisting of quantitative and open-ended questions, and a qualitative in-depth, semi-

structured telephone interview. Of the 95 faculty and graduate students who attended the academic conference, 47 attendees completed the two-page survey. The survey was divided into three sections. The first section was comprised of questions regarding the participant's view of the improvisational workshop. The second section was the rating of the participant's perception of the workshop and the skills and techniques employed in the improvisational workshop and the third section collected demographic information of the participants (Benjamin & Kline, 2019). Of the 47 who completed the survey, twenty invitations were sent, and six participants accepted the invitation. The author interviewed the 6 participants via telephone (Benjamin & Kline, 2019).

The three themes that emerged during data analysis were communication skills development, personal challenge, and enjoyable workshop (Benjamin & Kline, 2019). 85% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the improvisational workshop personally benefitted them. 80% of the participants also strongly agreed or agreed that there was an increase in their communication and listening skills after the workshop. Lastly, 60% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that the workshop made them trust others quickly and more importantly made them feel competent now (Benjamin & Kline, 2019).

Benjamin and Kline (2019) stated, "When people are having fun, they push their limits, but they also relax and are able to communicate better...improvisation can put people in touch with their own unique voice fostering a confident and creative professional" (p. 140).
The faculty participants in the study are open to using improvisation in their classrooms, and many of the participants will continue utilizing the improv mindset of "yes-and" with

their colleagues, family, and friends. Lastly, Benjamin and Kline (2019) concluded

improvisational techniques could assist an individual in becoming a better communicator,

listener, collaborator, and most importantly, a better empathetic human being.

There are assertions that improvisation is valuable to self-concept (DeBettignies

& Goldstein, 2019). Self-concept defines how individuals view themselves. DeBettignies

and Goldstein (2019) proposed that an essential outcome for educational programs is self-

concept improvement. A student who has a positive view of themselves and what they

can achieve are more likely to be scholastically and socially successful. Drama in

education and its various concept have been found to improve an individual's self-

concept (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019). Theatrical improvisation is a form of drama in

education and is considered an independent art form. Improv theorists have suggested

that the creative experience of improvisation can guide the exploration of self-expression

(Spolin, 1999).

DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019) conducted a quantitative research study on the

effects of improvisational theater on children's self-concept. The researchers

hypothesized that gains in self-concept would be sustained over time. The participants

were children in the fourth and fifth grades, ranging in ages from 8-11 years old, and

enrolled in an afterschool program of a large public school in an eastern city of the

United States. The study was reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB)

of the university and the directors of the afterschool program. Parental consent was also

obtained through afterschool administrators. Afterschool classes were 12 weeks per

semester, and the improvisational games that were introduced in each class were all based

on the foundational works of Spolin (1999). The data collection instrument was the Piers-

Harris 2 questionnaire that was administered at three junctions throughout the afterschool academic year.

The findings of the study support the introduction and practice of theatrical improvisation to influence the self-concept of children positively. The results also revealed that children who began with lower self-concept scores marginally improved more than those who started with a significantly higher self-concept score. Treatment replicability was a significant limitation of this study. Lesson plans may be the same for two courses, but no two improvisational classes will ever be identical due to the individualized creativity and spontaneity of improvisation. DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019) concluded that the positive effects of theatrical improvisation appear to be related to the initial level of a child's self-concept.

Educators in the field of health care agree that strong communication skills are essential and required of all health care providers (Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Jacob et al., 2019; Kaplan-Liss et al., 2018). Kaplan-Liss et al. (2018) developed a course to support health care students in developing their communication skills and empathy through improvisation. The authors indicated that the Association of American Medical Colleges recognized empathy as a significant aspect of medical education. Thus, communication skills training in today's medical school programs includes a section on empathy (Kaplan-Liss et al., 2018).

The communication training course developed by Kaplan-Liss et al. (2018) was conceived for medical, nursing, and dental students. The class was offered as an elective, from 2012-2016, at the Alan Alda Center for Communication Science at The State University of New York at Stony Brook (Stony Brook University). The Communicating

Science elective was offered to students as a stand-alone course and complemented the clinical skills course at the university. The course objective was the development of a student's communication skills, emphasizing clarity and empathy, utilizing improvisation, roleplaying, and verbal and non-verbal exercises. The seminal work of improv theorist Viola Spolin along with the famed actor Alan Alda's Alda Method was the improvisation foundation for the communications training exercises and activities. Both improv foundations required students to focus on whom they are communicating with rather than focusing on themselves. From 2012-2016, a total of 114 students, from the medical, nursing, and dental programs, registered for the course elective. There was no pre-requisite; all students who desired to take the course were enrolled in the Communication Science elective.

Kaplan-Liss et al. (2018) assessed their advanced communication training course through course evaluations. There were 76 students, across the three health profession programs, who completed course evaluations for the communication training elective. The results of the course evaluation revealed the following: 100% of students would recommend the Communication Science elective to fellow student; 96% of students rated the course with the highest rating; students indicated the techniques they learned were relevant to them as future health care providers; students also stated that they learned to better understand a patient's perspective by being empathetic; students specified that there was an improvement in their communication skills as a result of taking the elective; and an unexpected outcome was that students stated that taking the course helped them learn their medical material more efficiently. The positive response in the course evaluation prompted the university to now include 10 hours of communication skills

training and empathy in the preclinical curriculum.

Kaplan-Liss et al. (2018) proposed that based on the course evaluations, the communication training course they developed is an effective model of communications skills training with a focus on clarity and empathy. The authors suggested the employment of the course in other health care education institutions for improving health care provider's communication skills. The authors also recommended that communication skills training be embedded all the curriculums of health care education. Lastly, Kaplan-Liss et al. (2018) suggested the use of improvisation as a pedagogical tool and strategy in further clinical skills training classes.

Similarly, Bing-You, White, Dreher, and Hayes (2018) developed a faculty development course to address flow as a teaching strategy and how instructors can improve their skills in flow. Flow is the capability of instructors to adjust teaching strategies when unforeseen events happen (Bing-You et al., 2018). Improvisation is the blending of spontaneity with creativity (Spolin, 1999). Bing-You et al. (2018) employed theatrical improvisation in their pilot faculty development program to improve instructor's skills in flow.

Faculty members participated in a nine hours workshop over four sessions. The participants spent the first three hours in an educational learning setting that focused on teaching and thinking in action. The remaining six hours was devoted to participants being involved in improvisational games and exercises in an experiential learning environment.

The feedback from participants was obtained through a questionnaire at the end of the workshop and follow-up interviews. There was positive feedback on the effectiveness

of the workshop. Participants inquired as to how the workshop could be offered at their departments. All the participants commented on how the improvisation assisted the development of their skills in flow. Moreover, the improvisation sessions helped the instructors nurture their concept of flow. Another positive outcome of the workshop was that the participants learned to be more adaptable in their teaching strategies. The participants also gained knowledge in being flexible in their pedagogical approaches Faculty members also commented on how encouraged they were to be pushed out of their comfort zone and engage in creative and spontaneous activities. They felt they were given the opportunity to think outside of the box. Bing-You et al. (2018) suggested that the positive feedback from this pilot program may be the impetus for employing improvisation in future faculty development programs. The authors concluded that improvisation is an effective pedagogical tool in promoting teaching and thinking-in-action skills.

Experiential Learning and Roleplay/Simulation

In the Theatre discipline, roleplay is an acting technique that allows an actor to transform themselves into a character using scripted words (Hagen, 1973). Roleplay or simulation-based learning is an acting technique that is effective in developing cognitive and interpersonal skills in various fields of study (Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017). Roleplay/simulation also encourages creativity and stimulates imagination (Heinrich, 2017). Resembling improvisation, roleplay/simulation enhances the development of oral communication skills and listening skills (Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017). Lastly, the Nursing field employs various

roleplay/simulation scenarios as a pedagogical strategy to enhance learning (Dunn &

Riley-Doucet, 2017).

Dunn and Riley-Doucet (2017) conducted a quantitative research study whose

purpose was to examine the influence of roleplay/simulation scenarios on the expansion

of nursing student's confidence in assessing and managing the care of patients with

comorbid physical and mental illnesses. The roleplay/simulation scenes aimed to enable

nursing students to verbalize therapeutic communication skills, rehearsing nurse's

technical skills, and utilizing the nurse's knowledge of physical and mental health

symptoms in elderly patients. The student-led roleplay/simulation scenes were conducted

in an experiential learning environment. The theoretical framework for the study was the

National League for Nursing/Jeffries Simulation Theory. The sample participants were

from a Bachelor of Science Nursing program in the Midwest. There was a convenience

sample of 194 participants who consented to take part in the study (Dunn & Riley-

Doucet, 2017).

There were three established data collection instruments employed in the research

study. The Mental Health Nursing Clinical Confidence Scale (Mental Health NCCS) was

used to determine the mental health nursing student's confidence levels. The

Medical/Surgical Nursing Confidence Scale (Med/Surg NCCS) was utilized to determine

the medical/surgical nursing student's confidence levels. The Student Perception of

Effective Teaching in Clinical Simulation Scale (SPETCSS) assessed the student's

perceptions of the efficacy of student-led simulations (Dunn & Riley-Doucet, 2017).

SPSS 18.0 computer software was used for data analysis. The results of the data

analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant increase, from pre-test to post-

test, in the nursing student's confidence level in both nursing programs, mental health nursing, and medical-surgical nursing. Dunn and Riley-Doucet (2017) discovered that there was an increase in the nursing student's self-confidence of their communication skills, medical knowledge, assessment skills, and patient rapport.

The data analysis from the SPETCSS data revealed the participants as identifying the roleplay/simulation scenarios to be an important and positive pedagogical method in nursing. The data analysis also discovered that the nursing students recognized the roleplay/simulation scenarios as an effective means for developing verbal communication skills. A limitation in this research study was that it was conducted in only one higher education institution; thus, minimizing the generalizability of the findings in the study. Another limitation mentioned in the participant observation sheet was the poor roleplaying of the clinical symptoms in the student-led scenarios. The authors suggested using clinical faculty members as actors, in future studies, to support the authenticity of portraying the patient's symptoms.

Dunn and Riley-Doucet (2017) proposed that the findings of their study are significant in terms of evaluating the nursing program curriculum. Moreover, the authors suggested that the results of their research will assist in improving the nursing program outcomes. The roleplay/simulation scenarios provided nursing students with the authenticity of human-to-human interaction that is essential in the reciprocal development of comorbid patient care (Dunn & Riley-Doucet, 2017).

Another study in the field of nursing explored roleplay/simulation as a pedagogical tool in teaching nursing care. Sebold et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative research study on nursing students and explored how roleplay/simulation influenced their

reflections on nursing care. The participants in the study were undergraduate nursing students in a public higher education institution in southern Brazil. Roleplaying/simulation was employed as a pedagogical tool in a class whose topic of focus was "care." The authors asserted that roleplay is considered a clinical simulation approach to learning. They further discussed that roleplay/simulation offers researchers opportunities to observe events, in the medical field, that researchers may not otherwise be allowed to watch.

The data collection instrument for this study was the reflective portfolios of 32 nursing students. The participants of the study were selected through saturation sampling. A reflective portfolio is a document created by nursing students with reflections on their didactic-pedagogical activities in a class (Sebold et al., 2018). The researchers explored the nursing student's thoughts in two categories: Emotions in the act of taking care and receiving care; Reversing roles: benefits to the nurse in the act of caring. The findings of the study regarding the first category revealed student's reflection towards feelings of empathy, respect, and trust. The students also compared the roleplay/simulation activities to experiencing and depicting a real-life nurse and patient in a real-world context. The findings regarding the second category discovered that the nursing students reflected on the definition of "care," and what are skills are required to provide "care." Sensitivity to others, respect for patients, and providing a safe environment were other topics that were also mentioned in the nursing student's portfolios. The researchers also found that nursing students understood the importance of learning social skills such as empathy, kindness, warmth, and excellent communication. These social skills contribute to the establishment of bond and trust between nurses and patients (Sebold et al., 2018).

There were a few limitations to this study. The first limitation is the generalization ability of the findings in the study. The authors also indicated that the use of the student's portfolio's as the data collection tool was a limitation. In comparison to face-to-face interviews, the researchers did not have the opportunity and were unable to explore and obtain rich and thick descriptions from the participants of the study through in-depth interviews or a focus group discussion. Although there were limitations to this study, Sebold et al., (2018) proposed that the findings support the positive use of experiential learning methods, such as roleplay/simulation, in nursing education. Moreover, the authors recommend further investigation on roleplay/simulation as a learning strategy; especially from an instructor's perspective.

In a peer-reviewed research study, Caltabiano, Errington, Ireland, Sorin, and Nickson (2018) reported on the potential of roleplay/simulation in undergraduate students training as perceived by both instructors and students. The authors discuss the utilization of a scenario-based learning approach for undergraduates in psychology training. Scenario-based learning (SBL) is an educational pedagogy, much like roleplay/simulation, that employs scenarios or scenes to achieve program-specific learning outcomes in a real-life context (Caltabiano et al., 2018). SBL is a student-centered pedagogical method that initiates the self-discovery of knowledge and promotes problem-based learning (Caltabiano et al., 2018). The authors emphasized that the effectiveness of SBL as a pedagogical tool can be attributed to replicating workplace settings within the safety of a classroom environment; learning through enactment.

The authors also stressed the importance of roleplay/simulation as a pedagogical tool: roleplay/simulation teaches skills; roleplay/simulation explores topics;

roleplay/simulation opens the discussion to a problem; roleplay/simulation presents hypothetical situations. One of the authors employed roleplay/simulation in a Psychology training course for undergraduate students. Roleplay/simulation assisted the students in diagnosing mental health issues. The class role portrayed a scripted scene between a therapist and a client. Students in the class not only developed their diagnostic skills, but students also developed their skills in problem-solving, decision making, and teamwork. The instructors also used roleplay to improve the counseling skills of students, as well as a teaching strategy to familiarize students with various psychological disorders. Caltabiano et al. (2018) recommended that audio and videotaping of roleplay/simulation scenarios is an active learning strategy in psychology training and provides peer review. Instructors can provide students with feedback, and students can evaluate and reflect on their actions as perceived in the audio and videotape.

In the course evaluations, students expressed positive feedback and were encouraging in utilizing scenario-based learning in their courses. Students indicated their interest in being involved in the teaching process as well as the learning process through scenario-based learning. In roleplay/simulation, the students are active participants in the learning process. Caltabiano et al. (2018) concluded that there was positive feedback from both instructors and students regarding the use of roleplay/simulation in psychology training. The course evaluations, by students, supported the incorporation of roleplay/simulation in the clinical psychology curriculum.

Communication Accommodation Theory

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) describes how individuals adjust their communication when in conversation with another individual to manage to

understand each other; while at the same time holding on to their own identity (Giles, 2016). Giles (2016) posits that adjustments in communication behaviors minimizes social differences and advances an individual's positive identity to those with whom they are in conversation. The author proposed that the two accommodative strategies in CAT is converging towards and diverging away. Intercultural dialogue is enhanced through CAT's accommodative processes (Fang, 2017) and intergroup communication is enhanced through communication accommodation behavior (Kilgour, et al., 2019).

Fang (2017) conducted a qualitative study exploring the intelligibility of speakers communicating in World Englishes and how and whether they accommodate the language in intercultural interactions. World Englishes are cross-cultural variations in the English language (Fang, 2017). Communication Accommodation Theory was the conceptual framework for the investigation as the author suggested that the foundation of CAT focuses on communication adjustments to reduce social distances between speakers. The study also investigated how the tenets of CAT contributed to understanding communication in World Englishes.

The participant for the study were two English as Foreign Language teachers from India (one male and one female) and two administrative staff members from China (both female). The participants were all employees at a public university in South China, and all held at least a bachelor's degree. All the participants were in their late twenties. Both Indian teachers' first language is Hindi, and both Chinese staff members first language is Mandarin. The participants partook in a 15-minute topic-prompted conversation. Fang (2017) explained that a questionnaire was employed in place of interviews to allow

participants time to reflect on the activity. The computer software, ELAN, was used for data analysis and transcription of the topic-prompted conversation.

The findings of the study discovered that the participant's heritage was revealed by phonetic variations and pronunciations of vowels and consonants. The researcher suggested that speech convergence between participants of varying cultures occurred to advance communication between each other. However, speech convergence occurred more fluently and rapidly when participants communicated with speakers who were from similar cultures. The data also found that the phrase "you know" was used as a discourse marker during the conversations as a method of invoking shared knowledge. Moreover, the speech rate was found to be lower throughout the communication process.

Fang (2017) noted three limitations to the study. First, the non-verbal behavior, such as body language, pauses, and facial expressions, were not studied in the research. Second, only certain verbal features of speech were explicitly analyzed for this study. Third, the study focused solely on the participant's convergence and divergence application in communication from a cognitive perspective and not a socio-historical view.

The findings of the research found the existence of communication accommodation when speakers of World Englishes interact with one another. The speech adjustments, by both participants in the conversation, promote shared understanding while preserving each speaker's culture. Moreover, the author proposed that an individual' cultural and social identify aligned with their spoken speech behaviors. Fang (2017) concluded that communication accommodation advances the social context of communication.

Pregnant women are susceptible to gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM). GDM is defined as glucose intolerance and may lead to Type 2 diabetes (Kilgour et al., 2019). In Australia, most births and early postnatal care occur in a hospital. Hospital-based clinicians and general practitioners provide pre- and postnatal care for pregnant women (Kilgour et al., 2019). Both groups oversee the distribution of hospital discharge summaries to communicate care recommendations to women who have just given birth. Postnatal care instructions, follow-up care, and information on GDM complications are part of the summaries. GDM care requires effective communication to succeed (Kilgour et al., 2019).

Kilgour et al. (2019) engaged in a qualitative inquiry to explore general practitioner and hospital clinicians' perceptions on their communication experiences when caring for women with GDM. The authors stated that no research studies had investigated intergroup communication from the perspective of the clinicians who provide GDM postnatal care; thus, this study would fill the gap in the literature. The conceptual framework for the study was Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory. The participants, 16 general practitioners and 13 hospital clinicians, were selected by purposive sampling. The data collection instrument was a semi-structured convergent interview lasting 20-90 minutes. The researchers specified that the convergent interviewing approach utilized constant comparative techniques to explore emerging themes throughout the interview process. The researchers also noted that prior intergroup communication research had used convergent interviews as the data collection instrument. There were 23 individual interviews, a group interview of 5 participants and, one telephone interview. The interviews were audio recorded, and field

notes were taken during the interviews. Verbatim transcripts were created from the audio recordings. Leximancer software was utilized for thematic analysis of the transcription data.

The findings of the study revealed that the role of an individual, either a general practitioner or a hospital clinician, determined the emphasis of care to mothers with GDM. General practitioners focused on the timeframe of the postnatal follow-up, while hospital clinicians concentrated on the management of GDM. The perceptions of general practitioner's communication experiences with hospital clinicians were more negative than hospital clinician's perceptions of general practitioners. The data also discovered that women's care lacked communication accommodation from both the general practitioners and the hospital clinicians. Relevant information on GDM was not manageable by both groups; thus, GDM follow-up care was not clear and salient to the mothers. The authors proposed that transparency and comprehensibility of GDM postnatal care and follow-up be clearly outlined in the hospital discharge summaries. Kilgour et al. (2019) suggested that CAT provided an effective framework for understanding intergroup communication in neonatal care. Moreover, the researchers found that intergroup communication also influences the quality of communication as a prevalent influence on GDM care. Lastly, Kilgour et al. (2019) concluded that CAT provided a useful communication strategy in relaying GDM information to mothers for follow -up care. Communication accommodation behavior by both general practitioners and hospital clinicians allowed the exchange of information to mothers needing GDM care to be clear and understandable.

Literature Review Related to Methodologies

In this section, the research studies I will concentrate on are the groundwork upon which I will build my research. I will describe how the researchers in these studies informed and shaped their research through their foundation and methodology choices. In this section, the researchers chose either a mixed-methods (Chan, Liu, Fung, Tsang, & Yuen, 2018; Haugland & Reime, 2018; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Neilson & Reeves, 2019), qualitative (Akselbo, Olufsen, Ingebrigtsen, & Aune, 2019; Duijm, Svensberg, Larsen, & Sporrong, 2019; Jacob et al., 2019; Lee, Kim, Jung, & Kang, 2019), or quantitative (Lubis, Lubis, & Ashadi, 2018; MacLean, Geddes, Kelly, & Della, 2019; Moral, de Leonardo, Martínez, & Martín, 2019; Skoglund, Holmström, Sundler, & Hammar, 2018) research approach in examining possible influences of communication skills development.

Qualitative Methodologies from the Literature

The World Health Organization, the United Nations agency that specializes with international public health, stresses the importance of pharmacist possessing strong communication skills, verbal and non-verbal, and listening skills (Jacob et al., 2019). It is essential that pharmacist own dynamic communication skills as their interactions with patients are not scripted. Thus, the use of simulated standardized patient training that employs scripted responses, may not be as effective as improvisational or roleplay communication training methods (Jacob et al., 2019). Jacob et al. (2019) emphasized Forum Theatre has been a successful pedagogical tool in healthcare education. The authors recognized Forum Theatre uses scenarios that are dramatized to pinpoint the gaps in communication in a real-world context and then welcomes debate on ways to surmount

these insufficiencies in communication. Forum Theatre is a drama methodology

developed by Augusto Boal. Forum Theatre enables unrehearsed participant engagement

throughout the performance. Participant engagement, in Forum Theatre, suggests

teaching and learning are a joint venture. Throughout the process, the teacher and student

generate new knowledge. Audience participation is also welcomed in Forum Theatre

(Boal, 1979).

Jacob et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal qualitative inquiry on the efficacy of

Forum Theatre in the development of pharmacy student's communication skills. The

research was conducted in The School of Pharmacy at the University of Strathclyde in the

United Kingdom. Actor-led workshops were introduced sequentially throughout the

three-year student curriculum from 2014 to 2016. One experiential-based instructional

workshop was presented each year and consisted of group discussion, forum theatre

presentations with a following feedback session, and reflection periods. The workshops

were aimed at enhancing the pharmacy student's "flexing" skills in communication.

Jacob et al. (2019) defined flexing as a communication style where an individual adjusts

their personalized style to the style of the person with whom they are communicating.

Data collection for the survey was conducted through an online survey, Qualtrics,

with open-ended questions and a section that included student comments on any aspect

they wished to provide feedback. After the workshop, a web link was e-mailed to each

student inviting them to fill out the survey voluntarily. The online survey was available to

students to complete for two weeks.

The authors chose a qualitative inquiry because of the open-ended questions in the

survey. In explaining qualitative research as to their choice of research methodology,

Jacob et al. (2019) clarified, "...it allows a more comprehensive and user-oriented method of assessing students' satisfaction with the workshops. Qualitative methods will also provide a contextual understanding of students' responses, provide a richer description of students' perceptions, and leave the perspectives of students intact" (p. 376). NVivo 11 software was employed for data analysis. The authors used inductive reasoning to identify themes in the data and for all coding processes.

The Qualtrics online survey had a response rate of 42.4%. There was a total of 468 students who completed the questionnaire. Also, there were 427 students (91.2%) who left written comments and feedback. The comments and feedback ranged from a one-line response to a six-line reaction (Jacob et al., 2019). The following themes emerged from the research study:

1. Theme 1: students thought the workshops were useful in facilitating the development of communication skills
2. Theme 2: workshops encouraged student reflection
3. Theme 3: students appreciated the feedback provided
4. Theme 4: students thought the live, interactive nature of the workshops enhanced their learning
5. Theme 5: students' suggestions for improvement (Jacob et al., 2019, p. 377)

The data also revealed that students perceived the workshops as influencing their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Also, the data suggested an increase in the ability of pharmacy students listening skills. The authors propose that the effectiveness of the workshops was due to the scenarios being presented in real-life contexts and more importantly, there was an opportunity for feedback (Jacob et al., 2019). Lastly, in discussing the data analysis, Jacob et al. (2019) asserted that the use of an experiential learning pedagogy was the main strength to teach communication skill with feedback.

The author also pointed out that there has been a decline of communications skills over time when taught by instructional didactic methods.

One limitation of the research was the ability to receive in-depth feedback from the sample participants due to the data collection being processed online rather than face-to-face. The authors suggest a focus group discussion following the workshops as a supplemental data collection method. In conclusion, Jacob et al., (2019) stated, "Many current communication skills programs are ineffective in equipping future pharmacists as they are didactic in nature, do not mimic real-world situations, and do not provide immediate feedback to students" (p. 379).

Similarly, a qualitative study in Denmark explored student pharmacist's perception and experience with communication skills training (CST). Duijm et al. (2019) proposed that a student's attitude and how they make meaning of their experiences in communication skills development influences their learning ability and future counseling behavior in the field of Pharmacy. The location of this study was the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. The Pharmacy program offers two interpersonal CST courses to its pharmacy students. The first course is Information and Communication about Medicines course, and the second course is a Pharmacy Internship course. The first course is an academic learning course, and the second is an experiential learning course. Each of the classes was for six months. The researchers stated that according to Danish regulations, ethical approval was not needed; however, informed consent forms were signed by all participants of the study.

The researchers stated that a qualitative research method was chosen because a qualitative approach would allow the researchers to explore what meaning the

participants make out of their experiences with CST. The conceptual frameworks for the study were Bloom's Taxonomy and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. The qualitative data collection method was three focus group discussions. A semi-structured interview protocol was used in the focus group discussion. The researchers employed probes for clarification and more in-depth answers. The researchers used both a convenience and snowball sampling technique. A total of 15 participants were selected. The participants were either in their last year at the university or their first year after graduation from the university.

The data findings from the focus group revealed that the participants advanced in their understanding of CST as they progressed through the three focus group discussions (Duijm et al., 2019). Participants expressed how they made meaning of their experiences with CST more fluidly at the final group discussion as compared to the first group discussion. There was also an agreement, by the participants, that there is a need for practical communication skills training in the field of Pharmacy. The authors found that all the participants believed that communication skills training should be taught in an experiential learning method with individualized feedback rather than an academic learning method with lectures. Moreover, the participants suggested that the development of communication skills requires training and practice. The participants also recognized the importance of the Pharmacy Internship course as most of them commented that the "learning by doing" method was effective in their communication skills development. However, the participants also commented how they felt that the university had not prepared them, educationally, for the Pharmacy Internship at a local pharmacy. Another

issue that the participants expressed needing attention was the need for additional training in pharmacy counseling.

Participation selection through convenience and snowball sampling techniques was a limitation in this study. Another limitation was that the sample participants were only from one of the two universities in Denmark. The authors also comment that vocal participants in the focus groups may be biased in the topic than those participants who were non-responders in the focus group.

Duijm et al. (2019) concluded that one main challenge for educators is structuring the communication skills experience to encourage and support student's motivation in a positive manner towards CST. The authors also suggested that further research on the motivational aspect of students towards CST should be investigated. The authors proposed further studies should also include investigating if the findings of this study are similar in other countries. Duijm et al. (2019) stated that the results of this study are not meant to be generalized but may be transferrable to similar education environments.

A public health nursing program at a University in Norway was seeking new strategies in student training on the management of severe allergic reactions. Public health nurse education is a postgraduate education. Pre-requisites to the program are a bachelor's degree in nursing and one-year practical experience. In Norway, public health nurses administer vaccines at health clinics. There are instances when vaccinations are the impetus to severe allergic reactions; anaphylaxis is one of these reactions. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening condition that with appropriate treatment, patients will survive (Akselbo et al., 2019).

Simulation is increasingly employed as a pedagogical strategy in nurse education programs. Simulation is imitating a real situation. Simulation is learning in a real-world context. Akselbo et al. (2019) investigated nursing student's perceptions of simulation. The objective of this qualitative study was to describe the student's understanding of their experiences of simulating anaphylaxis during vaccination. The study also aimed to describe the nurse's reflections on their experiences of simulating the severe allergic reaction after vaccination. The conceptual framework was Kolb and Schön's learning theories.

Careful preparations were administered to develop a safe simulation environment. The facilitator of the simulations was an assistant professor who was also an experienced pediatric nurse. There was also additional support in the presence of an associate professor who is a qualified public health nurse.

The participants of this study were 30 public health nursing students. A class lecture informed the students about the simulation for the study. The participants were then divided into two groups: the observer group and the simulation group. There were two scenarios in the simulation exercise. A debriefing session occurred after each scene. Upon completion of the simulation, the nursing students wrote reflection notes about their experiences in both scenarios.

The researchers used all the reflection notes for data analysis. All refection notes were read word-by-word to derive codes. Themes and categories emerged from the coding process. The data of the study revealed that students emphasized the importance of a safe environment when using simulation. The students also acknowledged the essential need for professional and pedagogical skilled supervisors during the simulation

application. Interaction, priorities, and communication were also highly emphasized by the nursing students as crucial knowledge required in the simulation scenarios. All the participants recognized the importance of having a leader with clear and practical communication skills during times of crisis. The nursing students learned that excellent communication is vital in an emergency to make correct decisions. Lastly, the students welcomed and valued the reflection time during the debriefing sessions.

Akselbo et al. (2019) suggested that simulation provided nursing students practice and training in managing anaphylaxis after vaccination. The authors also proposed that communication and collaboration are essential elements of nursing. Akselbo et al. (2019) recommended simulation as an effective pedagogical tool in teaching and improving these skills. Most importantly, the research findings merit simulation as an educational strategy in public health nurse education (Akselbo et al., 2019).

Another study in the field of nursing investigated the educational needs of nursing programs in Korea. Lee et al. (2019) conducted a descriptive qualitative study identifying the educational content and needs of a nursing program from the viewpoints of both new nursing graduates and nursing instructors. Participants in this study was a convenience sample of seven nurse educators and eight new nurses. Participant inclusion criteria were new nurses working in the nursing field for less than three months, and nurse educators who trained new nurses for at least six months. The data for this study were collected from four focus group interviews. The researchers stated that the selection of focus groups for collecting data would provide richer and deeper descriptive information on the education needs of the nursing program from both graduates and instructors. Participants

also completed a structured questionnaire. All the focus group interviews were audio-recorded. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the study.

Data analysis was conducted through Patton (2015) content analysis process. Five categories emerged from the content analysis: communication skills, practical experiences, managing skills, prioritization, and education pedagogy. The authors emphasized that communication was the prevalent theme discussed by participants. Participants agreed that communication skills advance relationship building. Managing unexpected situations was also a topic of concern for new nurses. They had difficulty addressing patient's complaints concerning their healthcare. The nurse graduates also had issues with prioritization due to the lack of knowledge in emergency settings. Practical experience provided the most insight for the nurse graduates. Nurse educators stressed the importance of having a variety of teaching methods to deliver knowledge to students; such as the use of simulation.

Lee et al. (2019) concluded the study's findings support the requirement of current pedagogical methods in nursing education so that graduates can easily transition to the professional nursing field. The authors also proposed that educators need to be vigilant in improving their programs to fit the nursing student's educational needs. Lee et al. (2019) stressed the essential need for a smoother and more successful transition from nursing student to nursing professional.

First-rate patient care by healthcare professionals requires effective communication skills (Chevalier et al., 2017). Pharmacists address patient's medication care at patient-pharmacist counseling sessions. Effective communication is critical at medication counseling sessions so pharmacists can provide proper information about the

patient's medications, and the patients can express any concerns regarding their medications (Chevalier et al., 2017). A theory-based qualitative research study by Chevalier et al. (2017) explored the communication effectiveness of patient's and pharmacists throughout their medication counseling interactions. The theoretical framework for the study was the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). The two elements of CAT are convergence and divergence. Convergence is an accommodation approach that reduces communication barriers between speakers. Divergence is a non-accommodation approach that creates linguistic distances between speakers. In this study, the five CAT strategies that provided detailed analysis of effective communication between patient-pharmacist interactions were interpretability, approximation, emotional expression, interpersonal control, and discourse management (Chevalier et al., 2017). These five types of communication behaviors reflect the dynamics that occur in communication exchanges (Watson, Jones, & Hewett, 2016). The authors proposed that invoking CAT offered researchers the opportunity to interpret the patterns and flow of patient-pharmacist dialogue and helped identify instances of accommodation or non-accommodation during communication exchange. Chevalier et al. (2017) stated that the objective of the qualitative study was to explore pharmacist's communication approaches during patient medication counseling sessions.

The location of the study was a teaching hospital with multiple specialties. The participants were 12 pharmacists and 48 patients, from the hospital, who were selected through convenience sampling. The pharmacist would conduct a medication counseling session with a patient, and the entire interaction would be audio-recorded. Each pharmacist would counsel four different patients. The mean time for the counseling

sessions was 13.6 minutes. All the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and verified by comparing the transcripts with the original audio recording. The transcripts were then coded for the five CAT strategies to determine the effectiveness of each of the medication counseling sessions. The computer software, NVivo, was employed to assist in the organization of the codes that emerged from the data. Observational fieldnotes and reflection notes were also used in data analysis (Chevalier et al., 2017).

The findings of the study revealed that most pharmacists adopted some form of the five CAT strategies during the medication counseling sessions. The pharmacists adopted accommodation approximation behaviors regarding a patient's speaking volume, pace, and accent. The pharmacists also took accommodating interpretability strategies by utilizing layman's terms and easy to understand phrases. Discourse management strategies used by pharmacists included asking open-ended questions, listening to the patient, and advancing two-way communication exchanges. Emotional expression was accomplished by the pharmacist displaying empathy towards each patient and reassurance of any patient's concerns. Pharmacists achieved interpersonal control by promoting equality in themselves and the patient by reducing linguistic, social, and emotional barriers (Chevalier et al., 2017).

The authors suggested that the Communication Accommodation Theory played an essential role in the success and effectiveness of pharmacist's communicating skills during medication counseling sessions. The data of the research discovered that most pharmacists employ an accommodation communication strategy, convergence, when interacting with patients. The results of the study did not find any instances of divergence in patient-pharmacist interactions and exchanges. However, the authors proposed that

pharmacist should initiate the medication counseling sessions with open ended statements and questions to initiate communication accommodation between both speakers. Chevalier et al. (2017) concluded that all five CAT strategies were used by pharmacists during the medication counseling sessions, and that clear and effective communication between a pharmacist and a patient is essential during medication counseling.

In a follow-up study, Chevalier, et al. (2018) conducted a descriptive study to analyze patient-pharmacist data, collected from the previous study, utilizing the computer software Discursis. Researchers have employed Discursis to assist in examining conversations between individuals (Chevalier et al., 2017). Discursis is computer software that analyzes verbal communication (Discursis, 2019). The objective of the Chevalier et al. (2018) follow-up study was to analyze patient-pharmacist conversations using Discursis computer software on qualitative research data from the authors' prior study on patient-pharmacist interactions. By utilizing Discursis, the researchers of the current study sought to identify speech patterns, engagement of speakers, and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) strategies used by the pharmacist during patient counseling sessions. Moreover, Chevalier et al. (2018) descriptive study aimed to reveal how the computer software, Discursis, can enhance or augment the previous analysis of the qualitative data from patient-pharmacist interactions (Chevalier et al., 2018).

Discursis analyzed 48 transcribed audio recordings of conversations between patients and pharmacist by providing visual plots of the interaction. The visual plots provide information on the patient-pharmacist conversations with patterns of the speaker's speech rate, frequency of pauses, and articulation. The Discursis visual plots

revealed that 40 of the 48 patient-pharmacist interactions were rated as moderate-high engagements. Eight patient-pharmacist interactions were assessed as low engagement. All 48 visual plots indicated that the pharmacists employed an accommodation strategy when consulting a patient.

The findings of the study demonstrated that Discursis could improve and assist in the qualitative analysis of patient-pharmacist interactions. The visual plots provide researchers an opportunity to scan the information on the plots and view the speaker's contribution and engagement in the exchange more efficiently. Chevalier et al. (2018) concluded that the Discursis data analysis validated the qualitative data analysis of the authors' previous research study. The authors suggested that Discursis does have value in analyzing human interaction, as well as being a useful pedagogical tool in communication skills training (Chevalier et al., 2018). Moreover, Chevalier et al. (2018) proposed that CAT strategies and behaviors advance the comprehension of communication exchanges between speakers.

The success of providing patient-centered care is effective communication. Patient-centered care is the exercise of care, for patients and their families, in a manner that is meaningful valuable, and respectful to the patient (Jones, et al., 2018). Listening, communicating, and involving the patient in their care is essential in patient-centered care.

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) strategies assist nurses in communicating and interacting with individuals from different backgrounds and individuals who speak different languages (Jones et al., 2018). CAT was utilized as the theoretical framework for this research. Jones et al. (2018) explored nurses' perceptions

of communication interactions with parents in a neonatal nursery in a qualitative inquiry. In a prior study, the authors investigated the parents' perception of communication interactions with nurses in a newborn nursery (Jones et al., 2018). The researchers, in the current study, investigated how nurses' strategies and accommodation of communication differed when interacting with parents from different social culture.

Participants for the study were nurses employed in a neonatal special care nursery from two different hospitals in Australia. Data were collected in two phases. The first phase was in 2013 and had a participant sample of 12 nurses, 11 female and one male. The second phase of the data collection was in 2015 and had a participant sample of 29 female nurses. The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews lasted no more than 30 minutes per participant, and all the interviews were digitally recorded.

The transcribed interviews were coded for six CAT strategies: interpretability, interpersonal control, positive face, negative face, emotional expression, and discourse management. The researchers developed the coding scheme to examine the perceptions of effective and ineffective communication exchanges in neonatal care. Nurses' perceptions and descriptions of their communication experiences with the parents included accounts of communication accommodation, over-accommodation, or under-accommodation. The descriptions varied from being about the parent's behavior, the nurses' behavior, or both behaviors. All the descriptions were coded for themes and patterns (Jones et al., 2018).

The findings of the study revealed that most descriptions for effective communication exchanges between nurses and parents involved some element of

accommodation. The data also discovered that nurses focused on language comprehension rather than the differences in culture. The researchers found that ineffective communication exchanges always included instances of non-accommodation strategies or under-accommodation strategies. The findings of the research emphasized the value of studying how healthcare professionals interact with different cultures (Jones et al., 2018). Also, Jones et al. (2018) concluded that CAT strategies and behaviors are essential when communicating with individuals from a different culture.

Quantitative Methodologies from the Literature

Simulation is a pedagogical technique that is employed in nursing education to provide students with experiences in a real-world context (Haugland, & Reime, 2018). Simulation scenarios produced in a realistic manner and atmosphere also stimulates a sense of presence (MacLean et al., 2019). MacLean et al. (2019) conducted a concurrent mixed methods study, with quantitative data assigned as the primary method, to investigate a nursing student's perception of realism in a simulation experience and the effect it has on their level of presence and learning outcomes. The authors stated that in the field of nursing, presence is defined as the process of being with a patient, while the term presence in simulation indicates being present. Moreover, they investigated if simulation scenarios significantly increased realism and presence perceptions in nursing students. The authors' inquiry also focused on nursing student's experiences in realism and presence, during simulation, and how it influenced their learning outcomes.

The participants for the study were selected by convenience sampling. There were 141 students, 137 female, and four males, in a Bachelor of Science nursing program that volunteered to participate in the study. The following participant criteria were

established: students had to be in their second- or third year in the program; approved of the study's purpose, foundation, and procedures; participated in clinical placement within an acute care setting. All the participants completed the quantitative questionnaire. Purposive sampling was employed to select 12 participants to participate in a semi-structured interview after the simulation scenarios.

The researchers used or modified three established quantitative data collection instruments. The Simulation Design Scale was used to evaluate the simulation process. Dinh's Concept of Presence tool, modified, assessed the student's perceptions of realism, and the Quality Discharge Teaching Scale measured the ability of the student to communicate discharge related material. An in-depth interview was the qualitative data collection instrument. The semi-structured interview protocol was based on the research's purposes, and Dunnington's (2015) open-ended questions. The qualitative data aimed to explore the student's perception of realism and presence (MacLean et al., 2019).

The quantitative data analysis employed the software SPSS version 24.0. The findings of the study found that the simulation scenarios were appropriate and authentic to real-life situations. The data revealed that participants had a definite sense of realism and presence throughout the experience. The researchers also discovered that the positive relationship between realism, presence, and learning outcomes in their study is like previous studies on simulation in the field of nursing. Results of the qualitative data revealed that participants agreed that simulation better prepares them for clinical practice.

The simulation scenario increased their level of confidence and performance to transfer their classroom knowledge to a real-world context. The simulation scenarios also made participants recognize their deficits in their nursing abilities and knowledge. A

limitation of the study was the confidence in self-report ratings as both realism and presence are subjective existences.

MacLean et al. (2019) concluded that perceived realism is independent and sensitive to an individual; thus, realism and presence should be treated as individual concepts. Presence influenced a student's learning outcomes as it was a reaction to the simulation experience. The authors also concluded that simulation-based education in nursing enhances learning by providing students an opportunity to transfer their knowledge to clinical settings. MacLean et al. (2019) recommended that future research should examine how personality traits and clinical experience influence realism and presence in simulation.

The effectiveness of medical programs and the communication skills training within is subject to the value given by students in medical school (Moral et al., 2019). The authors stated that studies show experiential learning as the most successful teaching method for improving communication skills. The authors also asserted that a student's attitude towards communication skills training influences the amount of time a student will dedicate towards learning the craft. Moral et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study on medical student's attitudes towards communication skills training and the influence the viewpoints had on their learning. The location of the research was Francisco de Vitoria University in Madrid, Spain.

The participants of the study were 120 first-year and 110 fourth-year medical school students. The data collection instrument was the Communication Skills Attitudes Scale (CSAS). The researchers explained their reason for the choice of the data collection instrument by emphasizing that CSAS was developed to investigate the medical student's

attitude towards learning communication skills training. The tool also assesses the positives and negatives of the following topics: the student's viewpoint on communication skills pedagogy, the importance of communication skills in a medical doctor, and the significance of communication skills when dealing with patients (Moral et al., 2019).

The researchers employed the software, SPSS, to analyze the data. A total of 220 out of the 230 participants answered the questionnaire. The findings of the study found that the self-assessment of communication skills in fourth-year students were 10 points better than first-year students. There was also a positive correlation between the student's self-assessment of their communication skills and having a positive attitude. However, the data also revealed that fourth-year students had a lower degree of attitude towards communication skills training than first-year students. The researchers proposed that first-year students were untrained. Thus, they may not have yet formed an opinion or value towards communication skills training. The researchers also emphasized that the negative attitude towards communication skills training was aimed at the faculty's pedagogy on communication skills training and not on the importance of communication skills in their studies and clinical practices. Moral et al. (2019) suggested that a longitudinal study be conducted to confirm the results of their research.

One of the challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, in Indonesia, is interpersonal communication using correct English (Lubis et al., 2018). The challenges for EFL students include lacking confidence in the English language, constructing a thought using English, and lacking the interest to learn the English language. The authors also suggested that the students are not the sole creator of this

situation. They proposed that the universities in Indonesia employ conventional teaching methods in the classroom and student learning may be better served if innovative teaching models, for example, experiential learning, were implemented in Indonesian education (Lubis et al., 2018).

Lubis et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative research study in the English Department of Universitas Muslim Nusantara (UMN) Al Washliyah Medan, Indonesia. The objectives of the study were to investigate student's interpersonal communication skills and the influence project-based learning and experiential learning played in their communication skills improvement.

Purposeful random sampling was used to select 80 participants from two classes at the university. The independent variable was the integration of project-based learning and experiential learning into the course. The dependent variables were interpersonal communication and creativity. The data collection instrument for the study was a pre- and post-questionnaire with a Likert scale rating. The questions regarding interpersonal communication skills were adopted from a created rubric scoring guide, while the survey for creativity was adopted from the William scale (Lubis et al., 2018). The software SPSS was used for data analysis.

The was a normal distribution in the data of the study. The researchers also stated that the assumption of equal variance was achieved. The findings discovered that project-based learning and experiential learning significantly influence the interpersonal skills of a student. Also, the results indicated that project-based learning and experiential learning also have a significant influence on a student's creativity.

Lubis et al. (2018) concluded that innovative teaching methods (project-based learning and experiential learning) have a significant influence on the development of a student's interpersonal skills and creativity. The authors also proposed interaction between a student's communication skills and a student's creativity. Lubis et al. (2018) recommended the integration of experiential learning methods to assist EFL students in communication, creativity, and productivity.

Communication is an essential element of health care (Skoglund et al., 2018). The authors suggested that "caring" is a person-centered approach and includes effective communication. The authors also stated that previous studies had shown communication difficulties between patient and health care professionals (Skoglund et al., 2018). In the current health care environment, the care of elderly patients is prominent. Registered nurses, as well as student nurses, must care for the increasing older population. Difficulties in communication between patient and caregiver can be attributed to the widening generation gap, impaired hearing, vision, or cognitive functions of the patient, and different assumed expectations. Skoglund et al. (2018) examined the development of student's communication skills during nursing education in a three-year nursing program in Sweden. The quantitative research study was approved by the institutional ethical board of the university.

The research investigated the differences in self-efficacy rates between students in the second semester of nursing education compared to students in the sixth semester of nursing education. The researchers also investigated the influence that age had on a student's self-efficacy rates in the second semester compared to the sixth semester. Finally, the researchers examined how past experiences of working with the elderly

affected the self-efficacy rates of second-semester students compared to sixth-semester students.

The data collection instrument for the quantitative descriptive comparative research design was a 16-item survey, which was based on a questionnaire by Norgaard, Ammentorp, Ohm Kyvik, and PE, (2012). There were also additional questions inquiring into the student's demographic information and whether the student had previous work experience with elderly care. The researchers utilized a convenience sampling to select 237 participants for the study. The survey was administered to the students in the second and sixth (final) semester of their nursing education. All 237 participants completed the quantitative questionnaire; 143 second-year students, and 94 sixth year students. The demographics information revealed that 84 were female students, and less than 1% were male students. There was also 10% who reported themselves as neither female nor male.

Skoglund et al. (2018) used analysis of variance (ANOVA) for data analysis. The findings of the research revealed the following results: self-efficacy ratings by students in the sixth semester were higher than students in the second semester; students with previous work experience with elderly care also had higher self-efficacy ratings; the age of the student did not affect the self-efficacy rate in either group (Skoglund et al., 2018). The researchers found that the sixth semester nursing students had higher self-efficacy rating in communication skills than the second year nursing students. Limitations in the study included the self-reporting of self-efficacy ratings by students. The researchers asserted that self-reporting tends towards being bias; thus, they recommended an objective assessment to provide more reliability to the study. Another limitation was that the original questionnaire was in Danish and was rephrased into Swedish so that the

Swedish nursing students would understand the survey and increase the validity in the study. The researchers noted that the use of a known and valid data collection instrument, as they did, increases the reliability in the research (Skoglund et al., 2018).

Skoglund et al. (2018) concluded that the self-efficacy rating of communication skills in elderly care are higher in sixth (final) semester nursing students than second-semester nursing students. The authors perceived this as students successfully progressing in their knowledge and skills as they advance through their education. The authors also suggested that this study fill a gap in the literature and provides research data from the student's perspective. There are no courses in the nursing program that focus on communication with the elderly; thus, Skoglund et al. (2018) recommended that further research with an objective assessment on student's communication skills with the elderly in simulation and clinical settings is needed.

In bilingual countries such as Finland, various factors influence an individual's language choice. The two official languages spoken in Finland are Finnish and Swedish. Individuals in Finland apply both constructs of the Communication Accommodation Theory, convergence and divergence, in communication exchanges (Gasiorek & Vincze, 2016). Individuals utilize convergence when wanting their communication to be more like the other speaker. Individuals use divergence when wanting their communication to be different or distinct from the other speaker.

Gasiorek & Vincze (2016) conducted a quantitative research study investigating self-reported explanations by the majority (Finnish) and minority (Swedish) language speakers for employing linguistic convergence and divergence during communication exchanges in a bilingual country, Finland. Communication Accommodation Theory is the

theoretical framework for the study. The researchers focused on four motives, identity, competence, managing social distance, and enjoyment, for the language accommodations of Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking individuals. The participants of the study were secondary school students with varying ages from 16-19. There were 208 mother-tongue Finnish students and 118 mother-tongue Swedish speaking students. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire with a 5-point scale.

The findings of the study revealed that competence and enjoyment of speaking the language were the highest motives for applying either convergence or divergence applications during conversation exchanges. Managing social distance was the weakest motive for implementing communication accommodation strategies. The authors acknowledged that this was a significant outcome different from the expectations of the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework hypothesized that one of the functions of CAT, through convergence and divergence, is to aid speakers to manage the social distance. However, the researchers acknowledged that CAT was an essential factor in both majority and minority language exchanges. The limitations in the study included the size of the sample as well as utilizing only single items in the inquiry representing the four motives for convergence and divergence. Gasiorek & Vincze (2016) concluded that the study provided significant insight into reasons for language choices in a bilingual country. The authors also emphasized that the constructs of CAT, especially convergence, was an essential element in the speaker's choice of language.

Mixed Methods Methodology from the Literature

One of the essential skills vital in the medical field of Nursing is the ability to communicate with patients and their families to develop a caring relationship. Neilson

and Reeves (2019) conducted a mixed methods research study to explore the effectiveness of a theatre workshop in the development of first-year pre-registration nursing student's communication skills in pediatric end of life care. The research location was a university in the United Kingdom. It is mandatory that UK registered nurses have effective communication skills (Neilson & Reeves, 2019). The authors also assert that a challenging topic for all those in the medical field is opening conversations around pediatric end of life care.

The conceptual framework for the research study is Forum Theatre. Forum Theatre is a drama methodology developed by Augusto Boal (Neilson & Reeves, 2019). Forum Theatre enables unrehearsed participant engagement throughout the performance. Participant engagement, in Forum Theatre, suggests teaching and learning are a joint venture. Throughout the process, the teacher and student generate new knowledge. Audience participation is also welcomed in Forum Theatre (Neilson & Reeves, 2019).

The workshop consisted of two sections; a theory section followed by a Forum Theatre performance. The two objectives of the research study were 1.) to actively engage both nursing and drama students in a workshop on communication skills 2.) to further the nursing student's knowledge and understanding of communication techniques at the end of life and bereavement circumstances. The convenience sample, (n=158), were first-year student nurses at the university. Participation was voluntary and consisted of filling out two questionnaires containing both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. Ethical approval from the University was obtained, and a debrief feedback session, at the end of the workshop, was employed as careful consideration of the sensitive topic.

In analyzing the data from the collection before and after the workshop, Neilson and Reeves (2019) employed standard descriptive statistics for the closed-ended questions (quantitative data) and thematic analysis for the open-ended questions (qualitative data). Neilson and Reeves (2019) reported an increase in the student's perception of their ability to clearly communicate pre and post workshop. Moreover, three major themes emerged from the study: teaching through a workshop, a gain in knowledge, and an increase in skill through a process of reflection. The authors also note that the performance was willingly received and well-reviewed; even though, there was a minority (3%) who felt uncomfortable during the audience participation of the performance. Most importantly, the study revealed that the importance of communication skills development applies to all fields of nursing practice (adult, mental health, child). The findings discovered that 96% of participants agreed on the value of the workshop in developing communication skills. 93% of participants would recommend the workshop to fellow students in the course (Neilson & Reeves, 2019).

In discussing the findings of the research study, Neilson and Reeves (2019) concluded that the Theatre workshop did have a positive impact on first-year nursing student's perceived ability to communicate clearly during an end of life care situation. Moreover, the authors asserted that Forum Theatre was effective in translating communication theory into communication practice. The Theatre workshop aided in the development of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Neilson and Reeves (2019) stated, "Participants were given the opportunity to view, reflect on and discuss both developing communication in a range of scenarios and the impact of often over-looked 'routine' actions or behavior, such as mannerisms or body positioning" (p. 11).

They also noted the advantages of collaborative learning throughout the performance section of the workshop. Another benefit of the Theatre workshop was encouraging participants to take an active role in their learning; an essential aspect of experiential learning.

Neilson and Reeves (2019) recognized limitations in the research study. There were incomplete questionnaires in the data collection process. The authors recommend that additional time be planned into the workshop specifically for completing the surveys. Lastly, the participants were from all fields of nursing practice, and pediatric scenarios were the focus of the Theatre workshop. Thus, questioning the transferability of the research study.

In contrast, Hoffmann-Longtin et al. (2018) conducted a mixed-methods research study to explore an original programmatic instructional intervention whose objective is to advance pediatric residents communication skills in health advocacy settings. Earnest, Wong, and Federico (2010) defined health advocacy as "action by a physician to promote those social, economic, educational, and political changes that ameliorate the suffering and threats to human health and well-being that he or she identifies through his or her professional work and expertise" (as cited in Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018). However, historically, the pedagogical tools for pediatric resident's advocacy-related communication skills training were limited to academic lectures, community field trips, and classroom knowledge. Thus, the authors developed a day-long instructional intervention whose aim is assisting pediatric residents with their comfort and confidence level in communication and the field of pediatric medicine (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

The program, developed by the authors, utilized Applied Improvisational Theatre (AIT) as a theoretically based pedagogical approach. Applied Improvisation is taking the ideas, methods, and concepts of improvisation and applying them to business, education, and life; thus, solidifying the notion that an improvisation is an interdisciplinary approach. AIT is becoming prominent, as a pedagogical tool, in the field of medicine (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Kaplan-Liss et al., 2018; Sawyer, Fu, Gray, & Umoren, 2017). Moreover, AIT used in instructional training models views communication as a participatory partnership between patients and their doctors (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

The four research questions that guided the research approach were:

1. RQ1: How did residents' perceptions of their willingness and ability to advocate (both in the community and in the media) change after participating in the AIT workshop?
2. RQ2: What advocacy-related communication techniques (taught during the workshop) became sustained practices for residents over time?
3. RQ3: What did residents perceive as ongoing barriers to advocacy communication following the workshop?
4. RQ4: What did residents perceive as effective and ineffective advocacy strategies (from the workshop) in their workplace settings? (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018)

The authors chose a mixed-methods research inquiry collecting both quantitative and qualitative data on the AIT curriculum and the development of a pediatric resident's communication skills. Data was collected, pre-intervention and post-intervention, through surveys with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. There was also a follow-up survey distributed a few months (6-12 months) after the intervention (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

The sample participants for the research totaled 51 pediatric residents. The participants participated in a one day, seven-hour interactive workshop during the

resident's advocacy rotation period. The authors note that all pediatric residents were required to attend the workshop before completing their advocacy rotation.

The workshop learning outcomes were:

1. explain the importance of clear communication and recognize how to create clear meanings with different audiences
2. attend to the needs of an audience, read verbal and nonverbal cues, and adjust communication in the moment, as needed
3. reduce self-consciousness in communication
4. use storytelling techniques effectively to evoke emotion, build empathy, and make personal connections through clear, vivid language (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018)

The authors worked with the advocacy rotation faculty to gauge what communication needs and challenges are faced by pediatric residents. The workshop was divided into four sections: Improvisation for Physicians; Distilling Your Message; Partnering with the Community; Media Training. Each section included 1-3 Applied Improvisational Theatre exercises with a semi-structured debriefing session (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

There were 37 residents (72%) who completed the pre-survey before the workshops. There were 34 residents (67%) who completed the post-survey immediately after the workshops. Finally, there were 25 residents (49%) who completed the follow-up survey, 6-12 months after the workshops.

The results of the research revealed that Applied Improvisation training complements more traditional communication skills training. Moreover, AIT contributes to the development of communication skills by highlighting spontaneous responsiveness, empathetic influences, and human-centeredness. Most importantly, the data from the research demonstrated the positive influence AIT plays in the development of pediatric

resident's communication skills. Thus, the pediatric residents perceived the workshops both productive and worthwhile (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

The first limitation of the research study was the validity of using AIT as a communication skills training tool. The authors suggest that additional research on AIT as a pedagogical tool is required. The one-day span of the workshop poses a limitation in the study. The researchers found it challenging to argue that behavior may be changed in such a short intervention. The final limitation is the use of self-report data to evaluate the AIT training program may cause bias as residents may report what the authors want to hear.

Hoffmann-Longtin et al. (2018) concluded, "Although our study does have limitations, we believe it offers a new and innovative approach to teaching advocacy communication to pediatric residents" (p. 454). Moreover, the authors suggested that communication scholars consider creative approaches to communication skills training such as the use of Applied Improvisation. Lastly, the authors encouraged pediatric residents to view advocacy communication not as a transfer of information, but rather as a co-creation of meaning and knowledge (Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

Similarly, Haugland and Reime (2018) conducted a mixed study research study exploring the effect of scenario-based simulation on the communication skills of nursing students specializing in dementia care. The study also investigated how the ethical reflection of nursing students were affected by simulation. The researchers chose a concurrent mixed methods research design for the study as they stated it would complement various aspects of the study's purpose. Moreover, the researchers suggested that the mixed methods design would allow them to triangulate findings from the overall

data. To explore the participant's experiences, the researcher employed the following data collection instruments: questionnaires, observations, and focus groups. The participants of the study were 12 first-year nursing students.

The participants participated in a simulation training course which took place in the university skills laboratory. There was a facilitator for the training course, and participants were divided into two teams. There were two scenarios in the training program, and students switched roles in both situations. The objective of the simulation training course was the improvement in the nursing student's proficiencies of communication, legislation, documentation, cooperation, and mindset.

The data collection process consisted of three phases. The first stage of the data collection process had participants as peer observers, with a checklist, at the simulation training program. The list documented confidence-building approaches used by nursing students in the scenarios. In the second stage, all the participants were involved in two focus group discussion, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each session. The structured interview protocol used the Krueger and Casey (2015) guide, which was based on learning goals (as cited in Haugland & Reime, 2018). Both focus group discussions were audio recorded. The third stage was a questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The survey gathered the demographics of the participants, as well as information on their backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of dementia care (Haugland & Reime, 2018).

The data of the findings discovered that all students completed the questionnaire and participated in the simulation training course. Three themes emerged from the focus group discussion: gaining a patient's trust, practicing excellent and safe nursing, and

being aware of your attitude. Participants agreed that clear and effective communication skills were the foundation in gaining a patient's trust. The participants suggested that excellent communication is a two-way interaction; however, there needs to be a willingness to communicate while understanding the behavior in dementia care. The confidence building approaches that nursing student's emphasized as learning outcomes were patience, time, eye contact, and respect.

Haugland and Reime (2018) concluded that scenario-based simulation training was a useful tool in improving a nursing student's communication skills. The authors also found that the simulation training contributed to gains in nursing student's awareness in confidence-building approaches, gaining patient's trust, and ethical reflection. Haugland and Reime (2018) proposed that simulation affords student's a chance to blend theory and practice and most importantly, an opportunity to learn from mistakes.

Continuing in the field of nursing, intercultural competence is an essential quality that is required in nurses in today's global society. However, there is a lack of information on intercultural exchange students on the topics of pre-departure preparation and co-curricular activities (Chan et al., 2018). Chan et al. (2018) conducted a mixed methods research study to explore the influence of pre-departure preparation and co-curricular activities on exchange student's learning experience. The study not only focused on the learning experience of the exchange students but also the learning experience of the host students.

Participants in the study participated in an exchange program which consisted of online pre-departure activity, two online videos, and three intercultural workshops in experiential learning environments. Convenience sampling yielded 62 exchange students;

of which 56 (90%) completed the pre- and post-visit questionnaire. Sixteen host students were recruited to serve as ambassadors for the exchange students. The quantitative data were derived from the pre- and post-surveys using the Cultural Intelligence Scale with a 7-point Likert Scale rating. Chan et al. (2018) stated, "Cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as one's ability to function and manage effectively across cultural situations" (p. 44). The qualitative data resulted from the discussions of the exchange students in three intercultural workshops.

Results of the quantitative survey revealed a statistically significant improvement of total CQ and knowledge of all participants after completing the exchange program. Qualitative data findings found that three themes emerged during the discussions at the intercultural workshops: student's motivation to engage in intercultural learning, barriers to intercultural communication, and enablers of intercultural communication. The researchers concluded that the exchange program in an experiential learning environment supported and heightened the student's intercultural awareness. Chan et al. (2018) proposed that pre-departure preparation and co-curricular activities encourage students to participate in intercultural learning and critical self-reflection.

Summary and Conclusions

Scholars have well-documented theatre as an effective pedagogical tool in all the learning stages of education (Gray et al., 2018; Gualdron, & Castillo, 2018; López, & Jiménez, 2018; Miles, 2018). Extensive studies have shown that Theatre not only teaches life skills (confidence, communication, time management, teamwork, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, a sense of community), but also influences all aspects of an individual's life (Allen, & Laine, 2018; Bell, 2016; Ivory et al., 2016;

Mareneck, 2018). The opportunity to explore and provide insight on an undergraduate students' perception on the influence a beginning acting class played on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment may encourage liberal arts curriculums to include Theatre as a job skills training program. This research extended knowledge by contributing to the strategies of job skills preparation in colleges and university, which would lead to improved higher education graduates with essential job skills; thus, impacting positive social change. This proposed research study was also intended to fill the gap in the literature related to Theatre pedagogy and its influence on an undergraduate student's verbal communication development for future employment.

       The review of literature focused on the concepts of communication development through experiential learning, communication accommodation, theatre/acting, improvisation and roleplay/simulation, in higher education. For the most part, researchers of the studies, included in the literature review, agreed and tendered findings that propose the importance of Theatre pedagogy, in an experiential learning environment, and its influence on the development of an individual's verbal communication skills. The premise of Chapter 3 is the research method. I will present the choice of research study methodology for my research, and the rationale and strategies behind the decision.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The chapter 3 sections will include the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and the methodology. The methodology section expands on the following topics based on my research study: the participant selection logic, the instrumentation, the procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, and the data analysis plan. The concluding sections of Chapter 3 will be sections on the issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures. The final part of Chapter 3 will be a summary of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative research question focuses on a topic and simultaneously is the lens in which the researcher captures the experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative research question is open-ended and does not include a hypothesis; however, it is specific enough to establish boundaries surrounding a topic (Mayan, 2009). The research question for this generic qualitative research study was:

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment?

The review of literature analysis, in chapter 2, highlighted the effectiveness of selected theatre/acting concepts as a pedagogical tool. The phenomenon of interest was

the undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played in their verbal communication skills development. To better understand the phenomenon, a field investigation of a beginning acting class at a liberal arts university was required. This research explored and provided insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment.

Research Tradition

A qualitative research design was selected for this study. More specifically, a generic qualitative inquiry was chosen as the research method for my study as it was not guided by an established set of philosophic assumptions and traditions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, Patton (2015) asserted that a generic qualitative inquiry utilizes qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, but not frame the inquiry with a specific epistemological tradition (Patton, 2015). As a qualitative research method, a generic qualitative inquiry involves fieldwork investigation in real-world settings and queries with open-ended questions (Patton, 2015). This study explored a potential opportunity for verbal communication skills development in undergraduate students at a liberal arts university. The potential opportunity explored may, as Patton (2015) described, "solve problems, improve programs, or develop policies" that address the current problem of undergraduate students graduating with the lack of verbal communication skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers,

2017; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019).

Patton (2015) also suggested that because the researcher is the primary instrument during the research process, the generic qualitative inquiry acquires a personal nature. As the researcher of this study, I brought my whole being, including my experiences, culture, skills, and emotions to the research process. This generic qualitative inquiry was guided through my lenses, filters, and angles (Saldaña, 2015, p. 4). This investigation explored and provided insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment.

Rationale for the Chosen Tradition

The research question is the driving force throughout the entire research process (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2016). First, the research question, then the research method (Stake, 2010). The research question inquired as to the undergraduate student's perception of the influence a beginning acting course for non-majors played in the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment.

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment?

The objective of the research question was to understand how the undergraduate students, in a liberal arts university, perceive the influence of a beginning acting class on their verbal communication skills throughout the course. Based on the rationale that the

research question drives the methodology, the premise of the research question in this study aligned with a generic qualitative research method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The research question did not align with the tenets of ethnographic research. Ethnography is a complex description of the values and behaviors of a culture-sharing group (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Ethnography is the primary qualitative method of research in anthropology, and participants are investigated in their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Ethnography investigations involve not only observation but also participation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researcher participation was not incorporated into this study.

The research question did not also align with the tenets of grounded theory research. The focus of grounded theory research is to uncover a theory or building theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The theory emerges from the research data of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The overall objective is building a grounded theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study explored and provided insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The objective of this study was not aimed to build a grounded theory of undergraduate students' experience in a beginning acting class.

The research question did not align with the tenets of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry focusses on stories of an individual's lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The participant's stories are told by the researcher. The stories are a collaborative process by the researcher and the participants in the inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of the research study was not telling

the stories of undergraduate students in a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university.

The two research methodologies that were considered for my research study, before selecting a generic qualitative study as my methodology, were phenomenology and case study. Phenomenology is defined as the description of the meaning a group of individuals offers to their lived experiences of a phenomenon. The purpose of phenomenology is to generate a universal essence from the individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Phenomenological research studies the core of a topic or subject (Patton, 2015). The essence of the individual's lived experiences answers the questions of "how" and "what" they experienced; as well as emphasizing the exploration of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Most importantly, phenomenology is describing and interpreting the essence uncovered by the participant's shared experience of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The objective of the study was to uncover the essence of undergraduate students' perceptions of being in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played in the student's verbal communication skills development. Thus, the research study did not align with the tenets of a phenomenological research study.

In their seminal textbooks, Creswell and Poth (2018), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Stake (1995), and Yin (2014) offer definitions of a case study. In a case study, Stake (1995) asserted the importance of seeking the underlying insight of the case. Stake

(2010) also proposed that case studies are simplistic as they are often limited to a single case. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined a case study as an in-depth and detailed qualitative research approach within a bounded system. The authors further asserted and chose to view a case study as a methodology. Creswell and Poth (2018) also suggested that a case study is both a subject of research as well as an outcome of the inquiry.

Similarly, Yin (2014) offered that case studies address the "why" or "how" questions relating to the phenomenon being studied. Equally, Yin (2014) defined a case study as an empirical inquiry exploring a phenomenon in-depth and within its real-world situations and context. Yin (2014) added that boundaries and meaning between the phenomenon and context might lack in clarity in case studies. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) acknowledged the dispute of case studies as to whether the investigation is the object of the research or the product of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined "a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). The authors offered the characteristics of cases in a case study as being narrowly focused in a bounded system, a single unit with limits or boundaries. Moreover, case studies are categorized by the analysis of the unit (case), and not by the topic or subject of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The investigation explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. The unit or case of study is the perceptions the undergraduate students give for their experiences in

the class and how the course influenced their verbal communication skills development, and not the undergraduate students enrolled in a beginning acting class. However, a case study requires a case to be either a noun, a thing, or an entity under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, the unit or case of this research study did not conform to the characteristics and requirements of a case study.

In summary, the premise of my research question aligned with a generic qualitative research method. The research question asked was intended to investigate a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence the course played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that generic qualitative inquiries generate strategies, techniques, and practices from the research data. The findings of this research study contributed to the policy of job skills preparation, which may lead to improved higher education graduates with essential job skills. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns.

Role of the Researcher

I was both an observer and participant in my research study. As a qualitative researcher, I was interested in "understanding the meaning people have constructed" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15); including, how people make sense of their experiences and lives in the world. The role of the researcher, in qualitative research, is as much an essential part of the research process as the roles of the participants and collected data (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). I was also the primary instrument for the collection of data, as

well as the primary instrument in the analysis of that data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 2010). As the sole researcher of this study, I brought my whole being, including my experiences, culture, skills, and emotions to the research process. I guided my inquiry through my lenses, filters, and angles (Saldaña, 2015).

I conducted my research study objectively, even though I was playing a subjective role (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). As the sole researcher in that subjective role, I identified my biases. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' it is important to identify them and monitor them...to make clear how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data." (p. 16). Thus, as a current instructor of theatrical design and someone who has been involved with theatre for over 30 years, I considered myself a product of theatre. In reflection, as I nurtured throughout my life, the theatre has always been an essential part of my development process. I could not disregard my identity, background, culture, beliefs, and perceptual lens, which I brought with me to the research study; therefore, it was vital that I monitored and controlled my bias for theatre throughout the research process. In this research study, my role as the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of data were acted out with transparency and objectivity.

My role as the principal investigator, in the study, was to be a writer, a conversationalist, an interviewer, a listener, a notetaker, and a data analyst. My role as a writer was to document not only the fieldwork data but to record information throughout the research study process (Yin, 2016). I created a researcher's journal for this purpose. Yin (2016) suggested that researchers review and edit their fieldwork notes immediately. The author recommended the conversion of field notes to fuller notes at the end of each

fieldwork day. The researcher should aim to have copious notes during the fieldwork process (Yin, 2016).

The participants for the study were selected from undergraduate students who had taken a beginning acting course in a liberal arts university. Each participant took part in two in-depth interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes, and a focus group discussion, lasting 60-90 minutes. These three face-to-face interactions with the participants were conducted in my roles as a conversationalist, an interviewer, a listener, and a notetaker. A good interviewer will yield high-quality data (Patton, 2015). My conversationalist skills were essential to "break the ice" with the study's participants. By doing so, I can only hope that the sample participants were honest, unfiltered, and unbiased when answering my interview questions. As an interviewer, I conducted the two in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion in a semi-structured format (See Appendix D, E, & F) to stay focused on the phenomenon and consistent throughout the interview process. I utilized my role as a listener during all the interview sessions. Not only was I listening to the participant's answers and taking notes, but I also observed the nonverbal communication of their body language. Thus, my listening skills during the interviews included being both an observant and "listening between the lines" (Yin, 2016, p. 28). The two in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion were digitally audiotaped to increase the confirmability of the research.

My role as a data analyst in the study was to analyze the information collected through in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion, field notes, daily data log, and the class syllabus. Yin (2016) advised researchers to care and value the data that is collected during the research process. A "priceless" category needs to be assigned to all the journal

notes, field notes, electronic files, and hard copies. Caring about and preserving your data must be part of a qualitative researcher's attributes (Yin, 2016). Additionally, possessing knowledge of my topic of research assisted me in my role as a researcher and data analyst (Yin, 2016). Being current in the literature review prepared me to be comfortable with the research topic and relevant previous research (Yin, 2016). The online transcription service GoTranscript was employed to provide verbatim transcripts of all the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion.

Methodology

In this section, a description of the participant selection logic, the use of instrumentation, the procedures for recruitment and participation, and the procedures for data collection will be presented. At the end of this section, an explanation of the data analysis plan for the study will be offered. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that the methodology section of a dissertation include the following topics: the researcher's logic for the sample participant selection process, the researcher's data collection instrument and source, the researcher's data analysis plan, and the researcher's strategy to ensure trustworthiness in the study.

Participant Selection Logic

The original research location of this study was Alpha University (pseudonym), a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. The beginning acting class, where I would seek participants, was part of the general education curriculum of Alpha University. The enrollment capacity for the beginning acting course was 20 students. I had no contact nor no association with Alpha University; because of this, the IRB guidelines, at Alpha University, would not permit me to be the principal investigator.

Upon consultation with my dissertation committee chair and the IRB at Walden University, I decided to change the location of the study to Beta University; also, a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. The Introduction to Acting course was offered in the general studies curriculum. The enrollment capacity was 20 students. As Beta University is my current place of employment, I was permitted to be the principal investigator for the research study.

Beta University had set guidelines to eliminate the research study being prejudiced. There were also established protocols to ensure the ethical criteria of the study were met. The IRB guidelines explicitly stated that participants in a research study at Beta University must not only be on a volunteer basis but must not have worked under or been a student of the principal investigator. The guidelines also stated that participants in a research study at Beta University must not have a professional or personal relationship with the principal investigator or any co-investigators. Moreover, the Introduction to Acting course where I would seek participants was in the School of General Studies at Beta University and not in the School where I am employed.

The data collection timeframe at Beta University was established to occur towards the end of the 2019 fall semester, around the November/December period. I contacted the professor of the class and asked if I may recruit participants from their Introduction to Acting course for the research study (See Appendix A). The enrollment capacity for the Introduction to Acting class was 20 students. I visited the acting class to introduce my research study and recruit participants on the Tuesday of the third week in October 2019. The instructor of the course afforded me 15 minutes at the beginning of the class to discuss my research study. Letters of recruitment (See Appendix B) were distributed to

all the students in the class at the end of the presentation. My contact information was listed at the bottom of the recruitment letter.

The students were asked to respond whether they were interested in participating by the end of the week. At the end of the third week of October 2019, only two students from the Introduction to Acting class responded to the invitation. The recruitment response rate was 10%. The expected response rate was 40%, which would have been eight participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that, in general, the strategies for sample size in qualitative research is amassing in-depth detail about a fewer number of individuals as compared to quantitative analysis. The authors further proposed that qualitative research does not have a specific protocol for sample size, but rather, attainment of saturation.

A snowball sampling technique was then employed to try to obtain the eight participants for the research study. The two confirmed participants who volunteered from the Introduction to Acting class were asked to reach out, once again, to the other students in the Introduction to Acting class and ask if they were interested in participating with them in the research study. The two confirmed students were also asked to reach out to their friends at the university who may have taken the Introduction to Acting class in previous semesters. Unfortunately, the students who did not respond to the research study invitation, once again, declined the inquiry to participate in the research study. There was unanimous consensus from the Introduction to Acting students that the research study was requiring too much of a time commitment; thus, the primary reason for the low recruitment response rate. Also, the two confirmed participants did not have any friends or know of anyone who had taken the Introduction to Acting class in previous semesters.

I consulted, once again, with my dissertation committee chair and the IRB at both Walden and Beta University. Upon consultation, it was decided that a change in research criteria was appropriate. Thus, I changed the participant/subject inclusion criteria for my research study to be more inclusive. Participants in the research study would not only be selected from the current Introduction to Acting class, but any undergraduate student who had taken a beginning acting class and was still a current student at the university was eligible.

I contacted the Chair of the Theatre program and received a list of undergraduate students, who had not graduated, and had taken a beginning acting course in the School of General Studies. The initial contact with all the students on the list was through e-mail and face-to-face interaction. Convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling strategy, was employed for the participant selection process. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a non-probabilistic sampling strategy as selecting participants based on their accessibility. However, the selection of sample participants for the research study was not only based on their accessibility but their availability, as well. I accepted the first eight students who contacted me and agreed to participate in the research study after my initial contact with them.

The sample participants for the research study were on a volunteer basis. The face-to-face contact with each participant was close to four hours. The participants volunteered their time for two in-depth interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes, and a focus group discussion, lasting 105 minutes. Thus, a $30.00 Visa gift card was presented to each participant, at the end of the research, as a thank you for volunteering to be part of the study.

Instrumentation

The data collection process included two individual interviews, a focus group discussion, field notes, and a research journal. I used a self-created instrument for data collection for the individual interviews and the focus group discussion. This research study's topic and characteristics limited the accessibility and convenience of an existing data collection instrument. Thus, there was no interview protocol, created by a previous researcher that I could have employed for this inquiry. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that the researcher-developed instrument must possess elements of reliability (consistency of research results) and validity (accuracy of the findings). I will discuss both aspects in a later section of this chapter.

A series of two in-depth interview sessions per participant, each lasting 60-90 minutes, was conducted with an interview protocol (See Appendix D & E) in a semi-structured format. A focus group discussion, lasting 60-90 minutes, was also done with an interview protocol (See Appendix F) in a semi-structured format. Inquiries in all three interview protocols employed open-ended questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). More importantly, the interview protocol, ensured that the primary and fundamental line of inquiry was consistent with each sample participant (Patton, 2015), and most importantly, responded to the study's research question. Probing questions were also employed throughout both interviews and the focus group discussion. A document analysis of the beginning acting class syllabus (See Appendix G) provided the researcher with information on what elements of acting were being focused in the class and what was expected of the students. The information in the syllabus allowed the researcher to concentrate on specific improvisational exercises and roleplaying scenes that may

influence a student's verbal communication skills development. The information in the syllabus also assisted the researcher in developing the interview protocols (See Appendix D, E, & F).

The first interview protocol (See Appendix D) allowed the inquiries to be aligned with the study's research question. The second interview protocol (See Appendix E) focused not only on follow-up questions from the first interview but also provide the researcher with another opportunity to ask questions after the student has had time to reflect on the answers they provided in the first interview. Likewise, the second interview protocol focused on the two conceptual frameworks of the study. The third and final interview protocol (See Appendix F), the focus group discussion, brought together data points from the two previous interviews, and the researcher's reflections to press participants further about the phenomenon. A group dynamic, during a focus group discussion, engaged the students, more openly, to reflect on their experiences in the beginning acting course. The focus group allowed the students an opportunity to add to the topic and conversation about what may have been left out in the prior two individual interviews. Moreover, one student's response may trigger another student who may have left out something they wanted to share at the individual interviews but forgot.

The third interview session also allowed me the opportunity to thank each participant for being part of this research study. The participants were also informed that soon they would be receiving transcripts and analysis for their review. Being in contact and transparent with each study participant made sure that an honest representation had been accurately reported. The final step and conclusion of the third interview were debriefing each participant in the research study.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

The objective of this study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I investigated and analyzed a sample of undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. The research location of my study was a liberal arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. The Introduction to Acting course was part of the general studies curriculum of the university. The enrollment capacity for the course was 20 students. Eight volunteer students participated in the research study. I was the sole researcher who collected the data. Two in-depth interviews, in a semi-structured format, were conducted per participant of the study. Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes. A digital audio recorder was employed during the face-to-face interview sessions with the participants and the focus group discussion. A focus group discussion, lasting 105 minutes, provided the participants with the opportunity to express any last thoughts on the phenomenon, along with participant debriefing. The focus group discussion was the final face-to-face episode with all the participants; thus, the participant's exit phase of the study. The gift cards were distributed to the participants after the focus group discussion as part of the debriefing procedure.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data expressed in words are designated as qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed, "data collection is about asking, watching, and reviewing" (p. 105). Yin (2016) suggested four data collection methods in qualitative research: interviewing, observing, collecting and examining, and feeling. The

data collection methods in my study included: two in-depth interview sessions per participant, a focus group discussion which will be the final meeting of participants as a group, and document analysis of the course syllabus, the research study's field notes, and the researcher's journal. Before the first interview, all participants were required to complete an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix C). Once the two copies of the Informed Consent Form had been signed and completed, each participant received a signed and completed form to keep. Each participant was also asked to complete a demographics sheet (See Appendix H) before starting the interview.

  Interviews. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) defined, "An interview is a conversation that has structure and a purpose" (p. 5). In comparing interviews to conversations, Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that interviews are more one-sided than conversations. The qualitative researcher in an in-depth interview will ask open-ended questions, and the sample participant will provide the answers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In responsive interviews, the researcher's question will focus on a single subject and thoroughly explore the topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To achieve depth and detail in the interviews, the interview protocol (See Appendix D, E, & F) was structured around three types of questions: main questions, probes, and extending or follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The questions were aligned with the study's research question: What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment? Probing and follow-up questions ensued the initial question. One of the main questions in the interview protocol was: How do you perceive the experience in this acting class with helping you get a job in the future? Probing questions allowed participants the

opportunity to provide detailed descriptions in their answers. A probing question to follow the above main question was: How would this experience support you in getting a job? Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that follow-up questions aim to provide more depth to the participant's responses. Thus, a follow-up question to the probe was: Please share some experiences in the class that you perceived as advancing your verbal communication skills so you can procure employment in the future.

Focus Group. After completing the second in-depth interview with the participants of the study, I gathered all of them for a focus group discussion. Focus groups are a carefully planned discussion with a group of individuals who previously have had some shared experience (Yin, 2016). In a focus group discussion, the researcher will act as the moderator or facilitator whose job is to keep advancing the topic of conversation without bias (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Yin (2016) suggests that focus groups are an efficient method of interviewing several participants at the same time; however, the author also cautions that focus groups lose the in-depth quality of an interview as you are gaining less information from several participants at the same time.

The objective of the focus group discussion in my study was to bring together data points from the two previous interviews and discuss them through a reflective lens. Time had passed since the two individual interviews, and the participants have all reflected on their answers to the initial main questions. A group dynamic, during a focus group discussion, engaged the students, more openly, to reflect on their experiences in the beginning acting class. The focus group allowed the students an opportunity to add to the topic and conversation what they had left out in the prior two individual interviews. One student's response triggered another student who left out something they wanted to share

at the individual interviews. The focus group discussion allowed me, the researcher, to tie

up any loose ends in the data collection process.

As with the interviews, there was a time limit on the focus group discussion, as

well. A two-hour commitment was agreed upon by all the participants of the study. The

focus group discussion lasted one hour and forty-five minutes. I needed to monitor the

focus group discussion so that every participant had a chance to speak to the group. Yin

(2016) warned researchers to be aware of participants who want to dominate the group's

discussion. I, as the facilitator, politely but firmly controlled the loud participants and

engaged the silent participants without influencing the focus group discussion. The focus

group environment allowed participants to share their ideas, but it also enabled

participants to alter or refine their views considering the group discussion (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). This was my first attempt at being a moderator for a focus group.

Moderating a focus group is a skill that is developed through experience (Brinkmann &

Kvale, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2016).

Documents. In defining documents, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted,

"Document is often used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual,

digital, and physical material relevant to the study" (p. 162). Researchers review existing

documents as a method of collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However,

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggested that documentary material must be relevant to

the study.

In this study, the document I utilized was the Introduction to Acting course

syllabus (See Appendix G). The course syllabus provided me with information on what

elements of acting were being focused on, in the class, and what was expected of the

students. The information in the syllabus also allowed me to concentrate and research specific improvisational exercises and roleplaying scenes that may influence a student's verbal communication skills development. The information I researched was used in the data collection process, correctly, in developing the interview protocols (See Appendix D, E, & F).

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis started when I began the research study (Bazeley, 2013). Bazeley (2013) emphasized, "Analysis is laid on the foundation of our understanding about how the world works, what makes it what it is; and of how we, as human beings, can understand and learn about that world ..." (p. 1). The process of analyzing data co-occur with the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Planning and flexibility were two strategies that enhanced data collection and analysis (Bazeley, 2013).

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I investigated and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment.

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment?

My data analysis strategy was based on the step-by-step analytic methods sequence developed by Miles et al. (2014). The analytic method sequence began with

assigning codes or themes to the interview and focus group transcripts, field notes, daily data logs, and course documents. Once coding was completed, the sorting and shifting of the coded materials revealed and identified patterns, relationships between variables, categories, and themes. The next step, which I considered an essential stage, was a reflection period on the initially emerged categories, patterns, relationships, and themes. I continually reviewed the reflection notes written on the field notes and research journal during this reflection period. The entire process was then repeated several times until consistent themes, categories, patterns, and relationships linked to the research question emerge and were identified (Miles et al., 2014).

Plan for the chosen approach. Transcribing the data from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion occurred upon completion of the data collection process. I employed the online transcription service GoTranscript to provide complete verbatim transcripts of all the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion. Upon receiving the transcribed documents from the transcription service, I forwarded the transcriptions to the participants of the study for their review. This member check process was a respondent validation which helped improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the research (Saldaña, 2015).

Additionally, Miles et al. (2014) suggested qualitative researchers transpose their raw field notes to formal write-ups to ensure understandability by eliminating any abbreviations or short-cuts in the field notes. Transcription and formal write-ups are essential in the qualitative data analysis process as the words are where the data is found (Miles et al., 2014). Analysis of these words is then processed through categorizing and coding. The data collection of words become findings. While waiting for the transcripts

from the online transcription service, I transposed the notes that I had written in my

research journal. I also transposed the notes I had written in the printed interview

protocols that I used during the interviews.

Codes and coding. Saldaña (2016) stated, "A code in qualitative inquiry is most

often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-

capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.

4). Saldaña (2016) also suggested that coding is a heuristic process that explores and

discovers. Moreover, the author proposed that coding is only one method of qualitative

data analysis, and not "the" method. Coding is a cyclical process; thus, the first cycle of

initial coding presented patterns and themes in the data that allowed me to create

categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The initial coding process is also known as open

coding (Saldaña, 2016). The second cycle of coding was an analysis method of

reorganizing and recategorizing data from the first cycle. In the second cycle, I viewed

the data through a different lens to diminish the number of codes (Saldaña, 2016). The

coding cycle is repeated until the presence of themes and categories relating to the

research questions were identified (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I utilized the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 12, to

assist in the organization and management of all the collected data. Bazeley and Jackson

(2013) suggested that NVivo provides qualitative researchers with analytical tools and

support for the data analysis process, such as managing data and ideas, organizing field

notes and daily log entries, and visualizing data through interactive displays. Merriam

and Tisdell (2016) described the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis

software (CAQDAS) as a time-saving process. The software sorted the data in my

research study into categories, filed the data into organized folders, and made it easy to retrieve the data when needed. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also suggested that the use of CAQDAS adds rigor to a research study. Lastly, the mapping feature of CAQDAS provided me with a visual model, a word cloud, which assisted me in the analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

The objective of my research study was to produce valid and reliable knowledge within ethical means (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The validity of a research study depends on the relationship of the study's conclusions to reality (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, Yin (2016) stated, "A credible study is one that provides assurance that you have properly collected and interpreted the data, so that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the world that was studied" (p. 85). Credibility describes the quality and trustworthiness of a research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the trustworthiness of a research study is essential and vital to its value. The authors proposed naturalistic inquiry establish trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, they offered alternative terms as they apply more to naturalistic guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility equates and is parallel to the concept of internal validity. Credibility links the findings of the study with reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative researcher needs to ask the following questions: What is the confidence in the "truth" of the findings? Are the study's conclusions believable?

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that it is essential that the research study provides readers with enough detail to justify the researcher's findings. The credibility of a research study is the trustworthiness of the results. Credibility in qualitative research relates to the features of truth-value (Maxwell, 2013).

A qualitative researcher must employ strategies for enhancing the credibility of a research study (Patton, 2015). The principle of triangulation is a strategy employed by qualitative researchers to assist in establishing the trustworthiness of the research study (Yin, 2016). The strategy of triangulation is used to ensure the research findings are rich, robust, thorough, and well developed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In my research study, I used a data triangulation of interviews, a focus group, and course documents to establish credibility. I also used the following additional strategies to enhance the credibility of my research study: admission of researcher's bias, prolonged engagement with the sample participants, member checks, and rich, thick descriptions (Maxwell, 2013; Strauss, & Corbin, 2015).

My strategies to enhance credibility in my research study included the following processes. In the role of the researcher section of this chapter, I admitted my bias for Theatre and discussed the strategies I used to monitor and control my bias throughout the research. I scheduled three interview sessions with each student in the study to accomplish a prolonged engagement with the sample participants. I utilized the strategy of member checking by sending each sample participant a copy of the interview transcripts as well as my analysis of the data collection for their review. Lastly, I employed triangulation in my analysis with well-developed descriptions that are rich, robust, and thick.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability equates and is parallel to the concept of external validity. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined transferability as the ability to which the results of the research can be applicable beyond the study's boundaries. The readers of my research will determine the transferability of my research. Korstjens and Moser (2018) asserted, "The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description... Describing not just the behavior and experiences, but their context as well, so that the behavior and experiences become meaningful to an outsider" (p. 121, 122). To obtain a thick description, my method of data collection included face-to-face interview sessions (in-depth with two interviews per participant), a focus group discussion (final meeting of participants as a group), and document analysis (review of the course syllabus).

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) concluded that dependability is synonymous with reliability and consistency. Dependability is presenting research findings that are consistent and can be replicated by other researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Dependability, in my research study, was achieved by implementing the strategies for promoting validating and reliability as set by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The authors proposed the following strategy be implemented in a qualitative research study: triangulation, member-checking persistent data collection involvement, reflexivity of the researcher's, review by peers, and rich, thick descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I employed the strategy suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) in my research study.

Confirmability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that confirmability equates and is parallel to the concept of objectivity in qualitative studies. The authors defined confirmability as verifying that the results of the research study were shaped by the research participants rather than the researcher themselves. Thus, the research study was accomplished with an aspect of neutrality. Korstjens and Moser (2018) added, "The interpretation should not be based on your own particular preferences and viewpoints but needs to be grounded in the data" (p. 122). The authors also proposed the use of an audit trail to ensure confirmability. The audit trail produces transparency in the research process. I maintained a research journal to document my research studies' methods, protocols, and decisions. My research journal also included all my notes, thoughts, and reflections that I formulated during the entire research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Researchers must maintain an ethical spirit to protect participating human subjects in their research studies. Yin (2016) advised, "Throughout your entire career as a researcher, much less in conducting any single research study, you will need to uphold one critical attribute: You will need to bring a strong sense of ethics to your research" (p. 41). A researcher must possess virtues of research integrity. In defining research integrity, Yin (2016) proposed the meaning as being that the researcher and their findings can be trusted as being honest and valid. I achieved research integrity in my study by being accurate, truthful, and transparent throughout the research process. I reported my findings accurately and avoided errors in my research process by being prepared, organized, and planning. I also was efficient throughout the research process and allowed the data to speak for themselves; thus, avoiding any possibility of bias.

Another aspect of ethical procedures was receiving approval from two Institutional Review Boards (IRB). The purpose of an Institutional Review Board is the protection of human subjects from harmful research (Stake, 2010). IRBs implement rules of ethics to guide researchers in establishing a protection protocol for all participants in their research study (Yin, 2016). Thus, it is required that the researcher submit their research protocol to the IRB for review before conducting their investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated, "...approval processes of many institutional review boards are guided by policies requiring evidence of awareness of relevant ethical issues for the study and plans for addressing ethical issues related to three principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice" (p. 54). I obtained IRB approval from both Walden University and Beta University. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 10-08-19-0365395. The Beta University IRB approval number is 2019.194.

The first IRB approval to secure was from Walden University. The application for IRB approval from Beta University could not be processed until IRB approval from Walden University was granted. Formal inquiry to collect data from Beta University was not accepted until IRB approval from Beat University's IRB was complete.

Additionally, I addressed the principle of respect for persons by respecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the sample participants in the study. Pseudonyms (Student 1, Student 2, etc.) were employed in place of the sample participant's names to ensure privacy throughout the study. A consent form was also utilized for communicating the strategies that would be applied to achieve discretion in the research study.

Moreover, the consent form conveyed the right of the participants to exit the study at any time without any penalty. I addressed the concern for the welfare principle by providing evidence that I would not be placing the sample participants at psychological risk. In defining potential mental risks in research studies, Stake (2010) described, "They are the dangers of exposure, humiliation, embarrassment, loss of respect and self-respect, loss of standing at work or in the group" (p. 206). The third principle of ethical issues I addressed was justice. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted, "Justice refers to the need to treat people fairly and equitably, and this means we must carefully consider recruitment and justifications for sampling strategies as well as site selection and criteria guiding site choice" (p. 54). I was transparent throughout my research study by employing a journal to document my notes, thoughts, strategies, justifications, and reflections. I gained the trust of all the participants in my research study by treating everyone rightfully and impartially throughout my research.

Other ethical concerns. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that researchers review the

research standards set by professional organizations. The authors suggested the researcher examine the rules for the ethical conduct of research from the American Historical Association, the International Communication Association, the American Education Research Association, and the American Evaluation Association. As a novice researcher, I welcomed the opportunity to learn from those who have more experience in research protocol; thus, reviewing the standards for the ethical conduct of research from professional organizations was a valuable prospect. All professional organizations have websites to access and appraise their research standards. I also reviewed the Belmont

Report. Moreover, I sought continual guidance from my dissertation committee throughout the research process, and as I moved forward with my research study.

Another ethical concern in my research was the protection of confidential data. The information retrieved during data collection and my data analysis will be stored on a laptop that is used exclusively for my dissertation for a five year period, upon which time I will delete all the data. I am the sole user of the computer. The computer is password protected and is also on a secure cloud backup service. I obtained IRB approval to employ an online transcription service, GoTranscript. The transcription service provided complete verbatim transcripts of all the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion. My dissertation committee and I were the only viewers of the data collected in my research. I took all precautionary measures to protect the participants in my study by keeping their anonymity; while strengthening my research through the collected data with rich, thick descriptions.

Summary

Chapter 3 was a detailed presentation and discussion of the methodology process for my research study. I began the chapter by presenting my research question. The research question not only drives the methodology, but it also shows the direction of the research as informed by the literature review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2016). I then presented and justified the rationale for my choice of research design tradition, a generic qualitative study, and the purpose of my research. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I investigated and analyzed how undergraduate students, in a higher

education institution, perceived their experiences in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played in the student's verbal communication skills development. I was interested in understanding the undergraduate students' perception of a central phenomenon, which is the meaning these undergraduate students made of the influence an acting class played in the development of their verbal communication skills.

In the methodology section of the chapter, I presented my data collection plan. I described the strategies I employed for sampling, participant selection, instrumentation, participant's processes, and data collection. The methodology section concluded with my data analysis plan.

The issues of trustworthiness section followed the methodology section. I addressed credibility, dependability, transferability, and validity. I also discussed the ethical procedures that were established for my research study. I concluded Chapter 3 with a summary of the chapter.

I will present the findings from my research study in Chapter 4. The aim is to report rich and holistic data from in-depth interviews, fieldwork observations, a focus group discussion, field notes, data log, and course documents. The presentation of my analysis of the collected data included data triangulation, which allowed themes and findings to emerge.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns regarding the recent graduates' lack of verbal communication skills. A gap has broadened between the perceived abilities of higher education graduates and the verbal communication skills expectations of employers. The research question for this study was: What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment?

Chapter 4 begins with a brief review of the purpose and research question for this generic qualitative research study. The chapter will then follow with the details of the research, which includes the following sections: setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The final part of the chapter will be a summary of the data regarding an undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment.

Setting

The research location of this study was Beta University (pseudonym), a liberal

arts university in the Northeast sector of the United States. IRB approval from Beta

University was received at the end of September 2019. The Beta University IRB approval

number is 2019.194. The Beta University IRB approval documentation was then

forwarded to the Walden University IRB. IRB approval from Walden University was

received in the second week of October 2019. The Walden University IRB approval

number for this study is 10-08-19-0365395. With IRB approval from both universities,

data collection began at Beta University on November 4, 2019.

Demographics

The population from which the sample was drawn from are undergraduate

students at Beta University. There were two sources for participant recruitment. The first

source was a beginning acting class in the School of General Studies and part of the

general studies curriculum. The second source for participant recruitment was a list of

current undergraduate students who had previously taken a beginning acting course at

Beta University. The list of students was provided by the Chair of the Theatre program at

Beta University. The initial contact with all the students on the list was through e-mail

and face-to-face interaction. Convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling

strategy, was employed for the participant selection process from the second source.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined a non-probabilistic sampling strategy as selecting

participants based on their accessibility. However, the selection of sample participants for

the research study was not only based on their accessibility but their availability, as well.

I accepted the first six students who contacted me and agreed to participate in the

research study after my initial contact with them. I also recruited two participants from the beginning acting class for a total of eight participants in the study.

The eligibility criteria for this research study included (a) undergraduate students of all genders, who have not graduated and are still enrolled at Beta University, (b) undergraduate students who have taken a beginning acting course at Beta University, (c) undergraduate students who are 18 years old and above, (d) undergraduate students who volunteer to participate in the research study. A total of eight participants/subjects (see Table1) were recruited for the research study. All the participants met the inclusion criteria for the research. Table 1 lists the information from the Demographics Form (See Appendix H) that each participant completed after signing the Informed Consent Form.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range (years)	Year in higher education
Student 1	Male	White	Early 20s	Senior
Student 2	Female	White	Early 20s	Senior
Student 3	Female	African American	Early 20s	Senior
Student 4	Male	African American	Late 20s	Sophomore
Student 5	Male	White	Late Teens	Sophomore
Student 6	Female	White	Early 20s	Junior
Student 7	Female	African American	Early 20s	Senior
Student 8	Male	White	Early 20s	Senior

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym at the time of data collection. The following is the characteristics of each participant:

- Student 1 is a White male participant who is in his early 20's. He is a senior at Beta University majoring in Studies in the Arts;

- Student 2 is a White female participant who is in her early 20's. She is a senior at Beta University with a double major in Social Work and Studies in the Arts. Student 2 has Turner syndrome which affects her non-verbal communication skills;

- Student 3 is an African American female participant who is in her early 20's. She is a senior at Beta University majoring in Studies in the Arts;

- Student 4 is an African American male participant in his late 20's. He is a sophomore at Beta University and majoring in Studies in the Arts;

- Student 5 is a White male participant in his late teens. He is a sophomore at Beta University with a double major in Historical Studies and Disabilities Studies;

- Student 6 is a White female participant in her early 20's. She is a junior at Beta University majoring in Studies in the Arts. Student 6 has a learning disability;

- Student 7 is an African American female participant in her early 20's. She is a senior at Beta University majoring in Studies in the Arts; and

- Student 8 is a White male participant in his early 20's. He is a senior at Beta University with a double major in Communication and Media Studies and Writing.

A demographics sheet was given to each participant to fill out when we met for our initial interview. The participants completed the demographics information after the signing of the Informed Consent form. Additional information regarding the participant's characteristics was also gathered during the follow-up interview session. The data collection strategies and procedures will be discussed in the next section.

Participants

The data collection timeframe at Beta University was established to occur towards the end of the 2019 fall semester, around the November/December period. I visited the Introduction to Acting class to introduce my research study and recruit participants on the Tuesday of the third week in October 2019. The instructor of the course afforded me 15 minutes at the beginning of the class to discuss my research study. The presentation concluded with the distribution of a letter of recruitment to all the students in the class. My contact information was listed at the bottom of the invitation letter.

The students were asked to respond whether they were interested in participating in the research study, by the end of the week. At the end of the third week of October 2019, only two students from the Introduction to Acting class responded to the invitation. The recruitment response rate was 10%. The expected response rate was 40%, which would have been eight participants.

A snowball sampling technique was then employed to obtain the eight participants for the research study. The two confirmed participants who volunteered from the Introduction to Acting class were asked to reach out, once again, to the other students in the Introduction to Acting class and ask if they were interested in participating with them in the research study. The two confirmed students were also asked to reach out to their friends at the university who may have taken the Introduction to Acting class in previous semesters. Unfortunately, the students who did not respond to the research study invitation, once again, declined the inquiry to participate in the research study. There was unanimous consensus from the Introduction to Acting students that the research study

was requiring too much of a time commitment; thus, the primary reason for the low recruitment response rate. Also, the two confirmed participants did not have any friends or know of anyone who had taken the Introduction to Acting class in previous semesters.

The next step was to contact the IRB office at Beta University, as they were the IRB of Record for the research study and inquire as to the possibility of a revision in the participant/subject inclusion criteria. A change in research form was submitted to widen the inclusion criteria requirement for the study. The revised inclusion criteria for this study included:

(a) undergraduate students of all genders, who have not graduated and are still enrolled at Beta University, (b) undergraduate students who have taken a beginning acting course at Beta University, (c) undergraduate students who are 18 years old and above, (d) undergraduate students who volunteer to participate in the research study.

I received the approval for the change in research, from the IRB at Beta University, on November 4, 2019. The documentation was immediately forwarded to the IRB at Walden University. Participant recruitment for the research study also commenced on November 4, 2019.

Data Collection

There were eight undergraduate students as participants/subjects in the research study, with whom I interviewed, twice, face-to-face, and in one focus group discussion. The procedures outlined in Chapter 3 to collect data were followed as planned; however, as mentioned in the Chapter 3, there were variations in the data collection location and participant inclusion criteria. The change affected the data collection interview and the focus group plan and schedule.

The original plan and schedule for data collection were to have the initial interviews take place on Saturday, November 16, 2019, and Sunday, November 17, 2019. There would have been five interview slots per day for the initial interviews starting at 10:00 am. The follow-up interview would have taken place the following weekend on Saturday, November 23, 2019, and Sunday, November 24, 2019, with the same number of interview slots and timeframe as the initial interview. The focus group discussion would have taken place on Saturday, December 7, 2019, at 10:00 am. Beta University provided the use of the same classroom for both in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion.

However, as there was a variation in the participant/subject inclusion criteria, the data collection plan and schedule had to be revised due to the participants not being available as some of them worked during the weekends. The initial in-depth interview of the eight participants occurred at different days and times, depending on their availability to meet for at least 90 minutes. The initial in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 60-75 minutes, took place the week of November 4-9, 2019. The in-depth follow-up interviews occurred the week of November 10-16, 2019, with each interview approximately 60-75 minutes in length. The final meeting of the group was the focus group discussion, which occurred on Friday, November 22, 2019, and lasted for one hour and 45 minutes.

Location of the Interviews

The location for all the initial interviews took place in the backstage area of the Performing Arts Center at Beta University, specifically, in the costume shop and the green room. The costume shop is a rectangular room that is approximately 26-feet in

length and 20-feet in width. The sewing tables and ironing station run the length of the room on one side, and there are storage cabinets on the other side of the room. In the middle of the room are two worktables, a large one, and two small ones. The large worktable measures 4-feet wide by 8-feet in length and resemble a large dining room table. Four high office chairs, which are padded, surround the worktable. The chairs are comfortable to sit on for long periods. Although the interview was being conducted in a workshop, sitting at the end of one side of the table for our meeting made it seem like we were in someone's dining room. The costume shop was used for four of the eight initial in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion.

The other backstage area that was utilized for all the in-depth follow-up interviews was the green room. The green room in the backstage area of a theater is a waiting room where actors socialize before being onstage. The backstage green room is a 12-foot by 12-foot square area and is set up like a living room. There is a sofa, loveseat, and two individual side chairs that surround a large coffee table. All the furniture is padded and covered in leather, and very comfortable to sit in for extended periods. There are also two side tables with lamps on them that flank the sofa and loveseat. On one side of the room is a counter with underneath cabinets. A 40-inch flat television is mounted on the wall above the counter unit. The green room was used for the other four initial in-depth interviews and all the follow-up in-depth interviews.

Initial In-depth Interview

The initial in-depth interview, lasting 60-75 minutes, was scheduled with each participant by either e-mail or a face-to-face conversation. All the eight initial in-depth interviews began with the reading of the Informed Consent form (See Appendix C)

verbatim. Upon completion of reviewing the Informed Consent Form, each participant was asked if they had any questions or concerns. As instructed by the Beta University IRB, the information regarding the volunteer nature and confidentiality of the study was emphasized and repeated. A conversation on where and how all data from the interviews would be stored and guarded was thoroughly discussed. The audio-recording procedures, as well as the withdrawal from the research study options, were also reviewed. Once confirmation was received that the participant understood the volunteer nature of the study and that they understood all the information that was just reviewed with them, the participant was asked to sign two copies of the Informed Consent form. I signed both documents, as well, and gave each participant a signed copy of the Informed Consent form for their records.

For the 60-75 minute, individual interviews, and the one-hour 45-minute focus group discussion, a self-created instrument for data collection was employed. This study's topic and characteristics limit the accessibility and convenience of an existing data collection instrument. Thus, there was no interview protocol, created by a previous researcher that was available for this inquiry. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that the researcher-developed instrument must possess elements of reliability (consistency of research results) and validity (accuracy of the findings). Thus, an interview protocol for all three interview sessions in a semi-structured format (See Appendix D, E, & F) was created to maintain reliability. More importantly, the use of a semi-structured interview protocol will ensure that the primary and fundamental line of inquiry is consistent with each sample participant (Patton, 2015), and most importantly, responds to the study's research question. Probing and extending questions were also used in both the in-depth

interviews and the focus group discussion to explore the topic of discussion further. The order of questions in the interview protocol varied depending on the answers from the participants.

The in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion were digitally audio recorded. The primary recording device was a Sony ICD-PX470 stereo digital voice recorder. As a back-up, the audio recording app, Voice Recorder, was installed on my android phone. The Sony audio recorded was not only dependable throughout the interview process, but the recording was of higher quality than the audio recording app on my android phone. All the Mp3 files, from the Sony digital voice recorder, were forwarded to an online transcription service, GoTranscript. The turnaround time for transcriptions was between three and five days. As the cost of transcriptions was based on the length of the audio file sent to GoTranscript, I did not audio record the Informed Consent process and introductory discussion with the participants before reading the interview protocol. The closing remarks that were scripted were also not audio recorded in all the interview protocols. After the initial in-depth interview with the eight participants, the follow-up interview was scheduled with each participant as part of the debriefing process. The debriefing text that was employed was included in all the interview protocols. The debriefing process was not audio recorded, as well, as it would have added to the transcription costs. Upon completion of each initial interview, the Mp3 file was uploaded to my GoTranscript account for transcription. I also reviewed my field notes and made additional notes on the interview protocols I had printed.

A transcription was e-mailed to each participant for their review when the completed transcriptions became available on my GoTranscript account. Each participant

was asked to make any corrections and to make clarifications as they deemed needed.

The member-checking process is essential in qualitative research as the member checking

process is a respondent validation to help improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity

of the study (Saldaña, 2015). All eight participants approved all the initial in-depth

interview transcripts. There were no revisions or clarifications that needed addressing.

In-depth Follow-up Interview

A semi-structured interview protocol was also employed for all the follow-up

interviews, which lasted 60-75 minutes. The second interview protocol (See Appendix E)

focused not only on follow-up questions from the first interview but also another

opportunity for me to ask questions after the participants have had time to reflect on the

answers they provided in our initial meeting. The responses from the participants in the

initial interview, the guidance of what I had written in Chapter 3, and the beginnings of

my data analysis was the impetus for some modification of the questions I would ask in

the follow-up interview. The process of analyzing data co-occur with the data collection

process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Thus, I was not only collecting

data in the initial in-depth interviews, but I was also initiating the data analysis and

interpretation throughout the interview process. The answers of the participants during

our initial discussion prompted the condensing of questions in the follow-up interview

protocol and producing additional probing and extending questions (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016; Patton, 2015).

There was one variation from the proposed data collection plan during the follow-

up interview process. One of the participants did not show up for their scheduled follow-

up interview. I waited 30 minutes passed our scheduled meeting time. It was not until the

end of the day that I looked at my e-mails to discover that the participant had sent an e-mail earlier in the afternoon, explaining that they were called into work. I also found that they had texted me, as well. However, there is no cell phone reception in the backstage theater area, and the text was not received until the end of the day.

The seven other participants were present for their follow-up interview, which took place in the backstage green room. Each in-depth follow-up interview began by reminding the participant that the purpose of our discussion was an exploration of their perceptions of how a beginning acting class helped them make meaning of their communication skills development for future employment. Also, each participant was prompted that the discussion would again focus on their experience in a beginning acting class now that they have had time to reflect on that experience. Each participant was urged to continue to be honest and forthright as there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that were being asked. The in-depth follow-up interviews with each of the seven participants lasted 60-75 minutes.

The focus group discussion was scheduled after each of the in-depth follow-up interviews as part of the debriefing process. The debriefing text that was employed was included in the in-depth follow-up interview protocol (See Appendix E). Also, upon completion of each follow-up discussion, the Mp3 file was uploaded to my GoTranscript account for transcription. A review of the up to date field notes and the creation of additional notes on the interview protocols were completed as a method of preparation for the focus group discussion. The review of the answers from the follow-up interviews was to make certain that the data being collected would apply to and answer the research question for the research study.

When the follow-up interview transcripts were received from GoTranscript, they were forwarded to each of the seven participants for member-checking. All seven participants approved their in-depth follow-up interview transcripts as accurate. There were no revisions or clarifications that needed addressing.

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion, scheduled for two hours, took place towards the end of the afternoon on a Friday. All eight participants had confirmed that they were available and would be attending. The focus group discussion was to take place in the costume shop around the large sizeable worktable. Five additional high office chairs were brought into the workspace to add to the existing four chairs that were already in the costume shop. All nine chairs were positioned around the table, eight for the participants, and one for me. The focus group discussion was scheduled for two hours and was to commence at 4:00 pm.

There were seven participants present at 4:00 pm. It was unanimously agreed upon to wait 15 minutes before starting the focus group discussion to allow time for the 8th participant to arrive. While waiting for the last participant, name tags were distributed to everyone seated around the table. The name tags had each participant's pseudonym written on it. The name tags helped me, as the moderator, remember each participant's pseudonym.

At 4:15, the focus group discussion commenced with the seven participants that were present. Like the two in-depth individual interviews, a semi-structured interview protocol was employed for the focus group discussion (see Appendix F). The objective of the focus group discussion was to bring together data points from the two previous

interviews and discuss them through a reflective lens as time has passed since the two last individual meetings. I hoped that a group dynamic might engage participants, more openly, to reflect on their experiences in a beginning acting class at a liberal arts university. Another objective of the focus group was to allow participants an opportunity to add to the topic and conversation what may have been left out in the prior two individual interviews. One participant's response may trigger another participant who may have left out something they wanted to share at the individual interviews. One of the objectives of the focus group discussion was an opportunity for me to tie up any loose ends in the data collection process.

The focus group began by stating the objectives of the discussion and gathering, as previously outlined. The purpose of the pseudonyms on the participant's name tags was re-iterated. Moreover, I further mentioned that for transcription purposes, I would recognize or say their student number before them answering and contributing to the discussion. I also asked that the audio recorder be passed around to the person that is speaking to record their response. Like the two previous interviews, the participants were urged to talk freely and honestly throughout the group discussion. The first question asked of the groups to begin the conversation: How do you perceive your experience in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played on your verbal communication skills development, specifically, for future employment?

The focus group interview protocol was employed along with some additional extending questions when clarification was needed. Towards the end of the discussion, I shared, with all the participants, ten themes that evolved from the last two individual interviews (See Appendix I). A list of the top ten topics was handed out to each

participant. The participants were asked to take a few moments to reflect on them before we discussed each item as a group. Towards the discussion of the last two topics, Student 1 started answering a question by saying, "I know I've said it like 15 times..." then responded to the query. It was at that point that I realized that saturation was beginning to be achieved in our discussion. I also discovered consistency in the participant's responses to most of the questions throughout the afternoon's interview session. The focus group discussion ended after one-hour and forty-five minutes.

At the end of the focus group discussion, all the participants were debriefed and reminded that a transcription of the focus group discussion for their review would be sent to each of them within five days. I also thanked each participant and handed out thank you cards with the gift card enclosed to all the seven participants. After everyone had left the room, the Mp3 file from the focus group was uploaded to my GoTranscript account for transcription. I then remained in the workspace and made additional notes on the focus group interview protocol and my research journal.

I met with the 8th participant the following Monday. I gave them a thank you card with a gift card enclosed. The participant apologized for not attending the focus group discussion. The participant had work obligations which they could not neglect or re-arrange. They apologized profusely for missing the focus group discussion.

Five days later, the transcripts of the focus group discussion were completed. They were then forwarded to each of the seven participants for member-checking. There were segments in the transcription that were labeled as "inaudible" and "unintelligible." The member-checking process was essential in filling in these gaps throughout the focus group transcription. Additionally, on page 10 of the transcription, the transcription

---

labeled a speaker as "Male Student." Student 4 informed me that he was the "Male Student" in the transcription. There was another instance of inaccuracy in the transcription. On page 20, the transcription labeled a speaker as "Moderator," and Student 1 notified me that it was he who was speaking. The focus group transcription was the one with the most errors for accuracy as compared to the initial and follow-up interview transcriptions. Two factors that may have attributed to the mistakes in the transcriptions were multiple speakers in the conversation and the placement of the audio recorder. In the future, I will ask each participant to hold the audio recorder in front of them when they are speaking, as if they were holding a microphone. More importantly, I will also ask each participant to state their pseudonym, loud and clearly, into the audio recorded before answering or commenting on the questions.

Data Analysis

Planning and flexibility were two strategies that enhanced data collection and analysis. Planning was essential in the entire interview process, including the focus group discussion, as it lasted three weeks. Scheduling and reserving interview spaces required ahead of time planning. Flexibility in the research study was accomplished by scheduling all the interviews around each participant's availability.

Upon completion of the data collection process, the initial step in the data analysis process was to transcribe the data from the two in-depth interviews, and the focus group discussion. I employed the online transcription service, GoTranscript, to provide complete verbatim transcripts of the Mp3 audio files from all the interviews. There was a total of 227 transcription pages (see Table 2). Table 2 lists the number of transcription

pages per participant in the interview sessions and the number of transcription pages from

the focus group discussion.

Table 2

Number of Participant Transcripts

Participant	Initial interview transcript pages	Follow-up interview transcript pages	Focus group discussion transcript pages	Total transcription pages
Student 1	10	15		
Student 2	12	11		
Student 3	13	12		
Student 4	13	17		
Student 5	13	15		
Student 6	13			
Student 7	13	11		
Student 8	14	16		
TOTAL PAGES	101	97	29	227

All the transcriptions were forwarded to each participant, for their review, once

the transcribed documents were received from the transcription service, GoTranscript.

The member check process is a respondent validation to help improve the accuracy,

credibility, and validity of the research (Saldaña, 2015). Thus, the coding process did not

begin until the member checking process was completed, with all the participants

approving all the transcriptions.

Word Cloud

Before I began the coding process, NVivo 12 created a word cloud based on word

frequencies mentioned in the initial in-depth interview, the in-depth follow-up interview,

and the focus group discussion. A word cloud is an image composed of words used in a

text or subject, in which the size of each word indicates its frequency or importance. A

word cloud reveals the essentials and the visualized image is engaging to the viewer as they interpret the data.

NVivo 12 created a word cloud (Figure 2) from the transcripts of the initial in-depth interview, the in-depth follow-up interview, and the focus group discussion. Prior to submitting the transcripts to NVivo 12 for the creation of the word cloud, all the transcripts were revised to contain only the participants answers and not the interviewer's questions. All the participant's answers from the three interview transcripts were combined into one document. The document was then submitted into NVivo 12 to create a word cloud (Figure 2) for data analysis. The word cloud contained the top fifty words most frequently mentioned. The word cloud also revealed word frequencies that would be the foundation for the coding process. However, Saldaña (2016) warned that word clouds provide analysis only on a descriptive level by having the text of the more frequent words presented in a larger font (Figure 2). Word clouds do not analyze the research study's data but instead provides an informative visual collage presentation.
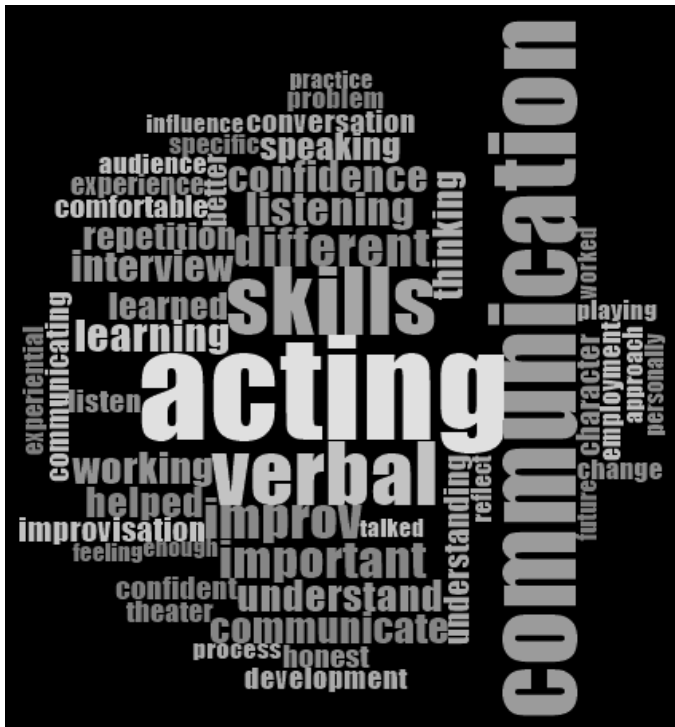
Figure 2. Word cloud from transcriptions. This figure shows a word cloud created from the top 50 words frequently mentioned by participants in the interviews and focus group.

Coding Method

The next step in the data analysis process and strategy that followed was based on the step-by-step analytic methods sequence developed by Miles et al. (2014). The analytic method sequence commenced with assigning codes or themes to the interview and focus group transcriptions. Once the first cycle coding, open coding, had been completed, the sorting and shifting of the coded materials revealed and identified patterns, relationships between variables, categories, and themes (Saldaña, 2016). The step that followed was a reflection period on the emerged themes and categories from the collected data. I discovered that the reflection period was just as important as the data analysis process. Stepping away from the analysis activity allowed me to contemplate on

the data collection process and relive the words of the participants. I used the reflection

period as a time of analyzing and learning away from the data. A review of the reflection

notes written on the field notes and daily data log also occurred during this reflection

period.

Following the reflection period, the entire data analysis process was repeated in

the second cycle coding process. Some major themes that emerged after the second cycle

coding process included verbal communication skills development, acting, confidence,

experiential learning, improvisation, honesty, job interview, the influence of theatre,

employment, and listening. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that coding is a cyclical

process; thus, the coding process in this research study was repeated four times.

The computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 12, was used to

assist in the organization and management of all the collected data. NVivo 12 not only

managed and organized the data from the transcripts, but it also helped in narrowing the

coding themes, categories, and patterns. The first cycle of coding, the open coding

process, yielded 140 codes. An inductive approach was used as the main objective of the

study was exploration and discovery. An inductive reasoning process guided me to reach

the categories and themes based on my experience and what was presented in Chapter 2

of the study, the literature review. Most importantly, the themes and categories were

aligned with the research question of the study.

The second cycle of coding reduced the number of codes as categories of codes

were combined with one another. The reduction of codes also continued after the third

cycle of coding. In the fourth cycle of coding, three themes and three subthemes emerged

from the data and were identified as relating to the research question of the study (Table

3). Table 3 lists the three themes and three subthemes that emerged from the coding process.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

	Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1	The influence of acting on verbal communication skills development	
Subtheme 1		Communication accommodation
Theme 2	Theatre pedagogy	
Subtheme 1		Listening
Subtheme 2		Experiential learning
Theme 3	A prospective working life	

Discrepancies

Two discrepancies occurred in the data collection process. The first discrepancy was where participants would be recruited. The original proposed recruitment location was an acting class at Alpha University. The course was specifically for first-year students who were not Theatre majors at the university. The actual recruitment location was an acting class at Beta University offered in the School of General Studies, and all students, including Theatre majors, were eligible to register for the course. The beginning acting class at Beta University was not part of the Theatre program's curriculum of classes. Additionally, participant recruitment was fulfilled with the help of the Theatre program Chair, who provided a list of undergraduate students, who had taken a beginning acting class at Beta University and had not graduated.

The second discrepancy was participant attrition. Some participants did not attend all three interview sessions. Of the eight who participated in the initial in-depth interview, only seven were involved in the in-depth follow-up interview and focus group discussion.

One participant did not attend the in-depth follow-up interview, and one participant missed the focus group discussion. Both absent participants apologized for not completing the data collection process. Both students were called into work without advanced notice.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

In Chapter 3, four strategies were proposed for this research study to establish credibility. The first strategy was to monitor and control my bias for theatre throughout the data collection process. I utilized data triangulation to verify and support my findings and interpretations. I also sought participant's input on whether my arguments and descriptions represented their beliefs as they expressed them in our interviews. Lastly, I asked my peers in the Theatre program, where I am employed, to review my analysis and interpretations. However, an argument can be made that having previous experience and knowledge of theatre and a beginning acting course gave me an advantage of understanding in more detail and the nuances of what each participant was meaning when speaking on the topics of improvisation and roleplay.

The second strategy was to have prolonged contact with the participants. There were two in-depth individual interview sessions with each participant lasting between 60-70 minutes per interview session. A focus group discussion with all the participants continued for one-hour and forty-five minutes. A prolonged contact was achieved with an average of at least four hours with each participant in the research study.

The third strategy proposed in Chapter 3 was to utilize the approach of member-checking. Each participant received a copy of the transcript from all three interview

sessions: the initial interview, the follow-up interview, and the focus group discussion. Accuracy and verification were sought from each participant in the research study. All the participants approved the individual interview transcripts, and there were no revisions or clarifications that needed addressing. However, the focus group discussion transcription required corrections and clarifications. The member-checking process was essential in filling in these gaps throughout the transcription to achieve accuracy.

The fourth strategy was employing data triangulation in my analysis with well-developed descriptions that were rich, robust, and thick. Before the start of the two interview sessions and the focus group discussion, all participants were encouraged to feel free and comfortable to answer the questions honestly in any manner they wished. Probing and extending questions were used to dwell more in-depth on the topic of discussion during all the interview sessions. These strategies were essential in obtaining rich, robust, and thick data from the participants.

Transferability

Thick, detailed descriptions establish transferability. To obtain thick, detailed descriptions, the method of data collection in this study included two face-to-face in-depth interviews, lasting 60-75 minutes, and a focus group discussion, lasting one-hour and forty-five minutes. The participant's perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played on their verbal communication skills for future employment affords readers not only something to think about but also allows readers to pave their way towards the transferability of the findings.

Dependability

Dependability was achieved in this research study by employing the following

strategies: data triangulation, member-checking, review by peers, and rich, thick descriptions. I implemented all these strategies in the data collection and data analysis process of this research study. I also relied on the guidance of my dissertation committee chair and methodologist, as this was my first attempt at conducting a qualitative research study.

Confirmability

In addressing confirmability, I conducted the research study with an aspect of neutrality. Throughout the research process, I was not only aware of my bias towards Theatre, but I monitored and controlled my bias in the data collection process. I audio-recorded all the interviews and the focus group discussion for accuracy in the data collection. I also utilized the member-checking process to confirm accuracy in all the data transcriptions. Both methods helped with keeping my bias in-check.

I also utilized a research journal in this research study. The research journal included all my notes, thoughts, and reflections that I formulated during the entire research process. My note-taking occurred immediately after the conclusion of each interview session and focus group discussion.

<div align="center">

Results of the Data Analysis

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Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are undergraduate students' perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment?

The results of the data in answering the research question have its foundation in the frequency of words that were collected from the participants in the two in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion. The online transcription service,

GoTranscript, produced the 227 transcript pages. The participant's answers in the

transcripts were inputted into NVivo 12 to generate a word frequency report. NVivo 12

produced a word frequency report of the top 50 words used by the participants in the two

interview sessions and the focus group discussion. These 50 words were then employed

as codes. Table 4 lists the top 50 words that were frequently repeated in the participants'

answers during the two interview sessions and the focus group discussion.

Table 4

Frequency Count of Top 50 Words

Top 50 words	Frequency in the transcripts
acting	1,449
communication	1,121
skills	897
verbal	811
improv	444
different	440
important	396
listening	340
learning	325
understand	308
confidence	307
working	296
communicate	294
interview	294
helped	287
thinking	268
repetition	240
learned	238
speaking	235
understanding	185
improvisation	184
character	172
listen	169
conversation	168

Top 50 words	Frequency in the transcripts
communicating	163
confident	162
better	161
comfortable	158
honest	157
development	156
experience	140
theater	140
employment	135
problem	133
audience	130
change	128
specific	121
experiential	120
process	115
playing	110
approach	108
reflect	102
future	100
influence	95
worked	95
talked	94
personally	88
enough	86
feeling	86
practice	84

The top 50 words were designated as codes in the data analysis process. The codes that were frequently mentioned in the participants answers were then analyzed to examine the relationship between the words and the research question. The examination was also a process to discover any themes, patterns, or categories within the codes. Themes and subthemes emerged from the top 50 words that were designated as codes during the data analysis of all the transcripts from the two in-depth interview sessions and the focus group discussion (Figure 3).
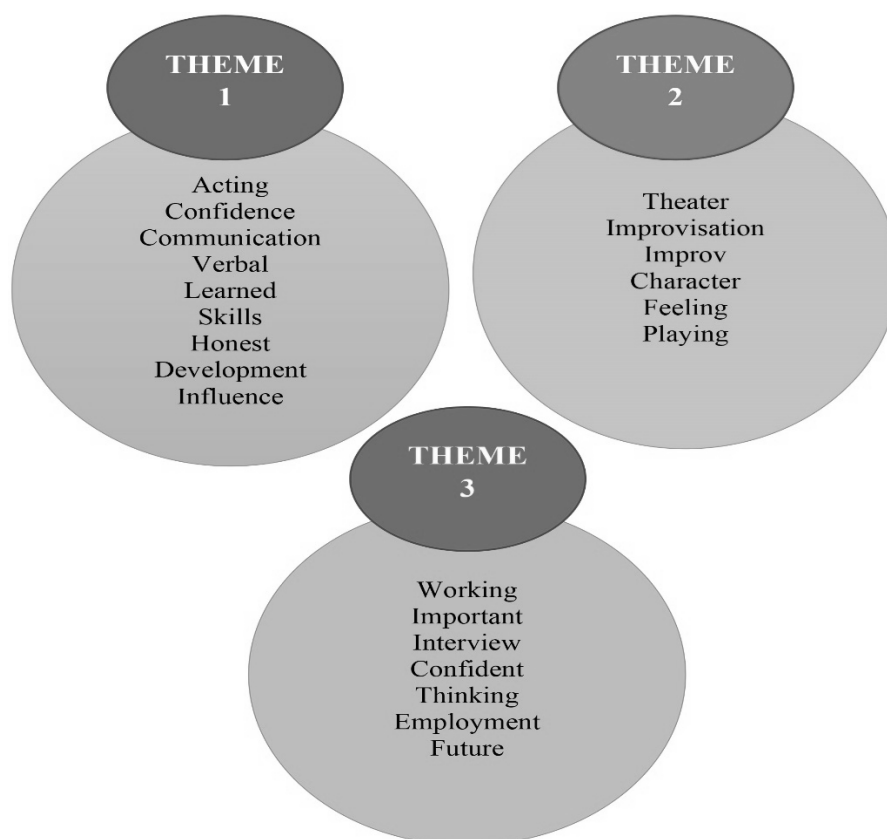
Figure 3. Themes derived from the top 50 words. This figure shows that three themes emerged from the top 50 words mentioned by the participants in the interviews and focus group

Three themes emerged from the top 50 words mentioned by the participants in the interviews and focus group. Theme 1 was the influence of acting on verbal communication skills development. Theme 2 was theatre pedagogy. Theme 3 was a prospective working life. Additionally, the words frequently mentioned in the participant's answers also produced one subtheme from theme 1, communication accommodation. There were also two subthemes that emerged from theme 2, listening and experiential learning (Figure 4). Figure 4 displays the subthemes that emerged from the words that were frequently mentioned by the participants in the two interview

sessions and the focus group discussion.

SUBTHEME 1

Communicate
Problem
Speaking
Listen
Change
Conversation
Talked
Understand

THEME 1

SUBTHEME 1

Listening
Understand
Conversation
Personally
Enough

THEME 2

SUBTHEME 2

Experiential
Learning
Experience
Approach
Helped
Reflect
Different
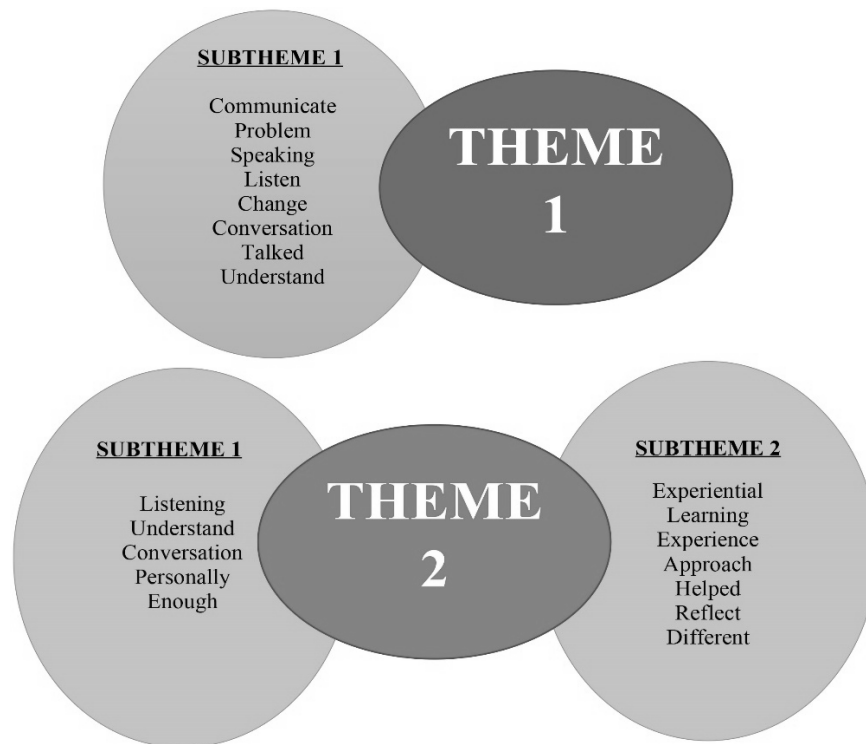
Figure 4. Subthemes derived from the top 50 words. This figure shows that Theme 1 has one subtheme and Theme 2 has two subthemes.

The research question regarding an undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment produced three themes and three subthemes (Figure 5). Theme 1 was the influence of acting on verbal communication skills development. Theme 2 was theatre pedagogy. Theme 3 was a prospective working life. These themes addressed points of emphasis in the data responding to the research question. The top 50 words that were frequently mentioned were the foundation from which the three themes developed. The relationship between the three themes that emerged from the data interrelate with each other to answer the research question (Figure 5). Moreover, there

were also three subthemes that emerged from the three themes. These subthemes also addressed points of emphasis in the data responding to the research question.
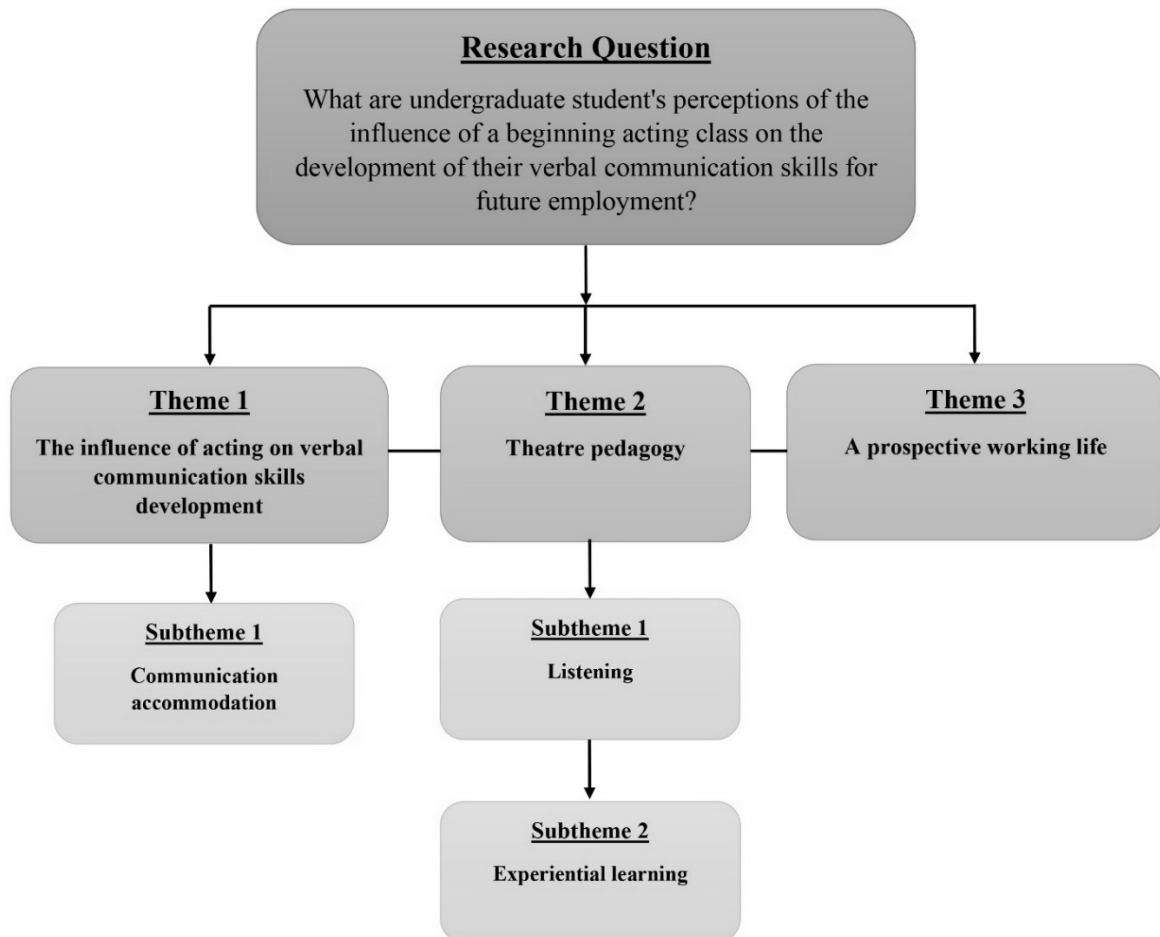
Figure 5. Themes and subthemes derived from the data regarding the research question.

In the next section, I will present each theme and subtheme, along with the code words that guided the path towards each theme and subtheme. To understand the context of the code words, I will also present the participant's answers that included the code words and how they related to the themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: The Influence of Acting on Verbal Communication Skills Development

Theme 1 is based on the data of the perception and experience of eight

undergraduate students who had taken a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university. The first theme emerged from the following codes: communication, skills, verbal, learned, confidence, repetition, better, comfortable, honest, development, process, and influence (Table 4). The code words communication, skills, verbal, process, and comfortable, were derived from the data of the participants describing their communication skills before taking an acting class. The code words learned, better, development, and influence resulted from the data of the participant's perception of their communication skills after taking an acting class.

A self-assessment of each participant's verbal communication skills was verified in the initial in-depth interview session. Participants were asked to rate their current verbal communication skills on a scale between one and ten. On the low end of the scale, Student 1 acknowledged, "Before taking a beginning acting class, I did not have strong verbal communication skills at all. I kept to myself a good amount, but I barely talked to anybody most of the time. I was a very solitary person." Student 5 also acknowledged a lack of verbal communication skills before taking a beginning acting class. Student 5 declared,

> Prior to taking this course, I felt that my verbal communication skills were
> lacking. I didn't really feel comfortable presenting in front of others, and
> personally I just didn't feel I could express the words properly or in order for
> others to receive my message clear.

Student 5 added, "I would probably rate myself around four or five, around that scale." Another participant, Student 7, also viewed her verbal communication skills as low by rating it a three. Student 7 confirmed her low verbal skills rating, "I didn't really speak

much. I was really shy in the beginning, so I was always quiet. My freshman year, I didn't really talk at all." In describing her verbal communication skills prior to taking an acting class, Student 6 said, "Probably about a four or five."

However, there were some participants who viewed their verbal communication skills, prior to taking an acting class as average. Student 2 stated, "I would say, probably average. I would say I was efficient, and I think taking acting class helped me improve my verbal communication skills." Student 3 concurred, "I would say average just because, I don't know, it's just the way that I was before versus now, it's just more confident in the way that I speak to other people and communicating things to them." Student 4 declared his verbal communication skills also as average, rating it a seven, prior to taking a beginning acting class. Student 8 added, "I feel like my level of communication skills was decent. It was average. Especially then before I came to this university. I was very private within myself too."

The common thread in all the participants' self-assessment was that they were not comfortable in the level of their verbal communication skills before taking a beginning acting class. Moreover, some participants were also not comfortable with themselves. There was consensus that all the participant's verbal communication skills were average to below normal before being involved with acting.

At the conclusion of each of the initial in-depth interview sessions, the participants then shared their perception of the current status of their verbal communication skills after taking a beginning acting class. The code words learned, process, better, development, and influence were derived from the data of the participant's perception of their verbal communication skills after taking a beginning

acting class. Participants were again asked to rate their current verbal communication skills on a scale between one and ten. Student 4 declared, "I still feel it's ten now. I do because it's something that I was passionate on working on, verbal communication. I do think that the class brought me to the ten." Student 3 stated, I would say before the class probably like a five and a half on a good day. Then after the class I would say like between let's say eight and nine just because I'm always growing and learning," Student 5 shared, "Earlier in the interview, I did say my verbal communication skills being really like a four to five. I would now say that they're probably around an eight or nine." Student 6 added, "I would say eight or nine. I learn something new every day about myself." After taking a beginning acting class, Student 7 declared, "I would say I'm a solid seven and a half to eight now, I still have room for improvement." Finally, Student 8 stated, "I guess I would like to think I am at an eight. I'd like to say that I am at the nine, but there are a lot of things I can improve upon. I have to say above eight."

There was an improvement in the self-assessment of all the participant's verbal communication skills after taking a beginning acting class. The acting class did influence the participant's verbal communication skills. Moreover, the participant's agreed that they learned to develop their verbal skills throughout the acting process. Thus, Theme 1 emerged from the code words and the pre and post acting class participant self-assessment data: The influence of acting on verbal communication skills development.

All the participants shared their perception of the influence a beginning acting class played on their verbal communication skills development. The code word confidence resulted from the data of the participant's perception of the influence an acting class had on their verbal communication skills development, being repeated 307

times (Table 4). A unanimous consensus from all eight participants was that the acting

class gave each of them confidence. Confidence was the impetus for each of the

participants' verbal communication skills development progression. Student 1 affirmed,

> It gave me the confidence to. It gave me the thought process to. I'm going to say
>
> it again, the improv is just so helpful, in terms of that. I'm going to say the thing
>
> about class presentations again, but I used to be giving class presentations and not
>
> be able to stop shaking. My leg, when I would sit back down, would just be going
>
> a mile a minute. Now, I can stand up there and just be able to look at the room,
>
> have that focus point on giving a presentation, and be ready for questions or
>
> anything because I'm able to think on the spot. It all definitely falls on
>
> confidence.

Student 2 concurred, "Confidence. It definitely helped me with confidence." In describing

the importance of confidence in connection to acting, Student 3, specified

> Confidence is all of the things that we do. You have to walk in confidently when
>
> you deliver your monologues and then you have to be in your scene confidently,
>
> even if your character is not confident, you have to be confident and sure of your
>
> own self because that's like the starting point of the whole thing. If you're like
>
> unsure, your character's going to be unsure in the worst way.

Also describing the significance of confidence regarding acting, Student 4 stated,

> Definitely confidence. It's funny because before the acting class I thought I was
>
> confident already. I did. I was sure that I was and that it would be a breeze, but in
>
> the moments of being forced-- in the moments of the urgency of this is what the
>
> stakes are, this is where you are right now, this is the scene, this is the energy, and

this is what's happening and you have to bring your truth to this imaginary

circumstance, in that I learned how many issues I have with vulnerability, with

trusting myself to be vulnerable. Not necessarily because I didn't know how to be

vulnerable or because I wasn't confident being vulnerable, but I was worried that

my vulnerability would not be perceived well. Now I know that that my sense of

vulnerability should not be based on anyone else and to have on this

communication I should be confident in the way that I am vulnerable.

Student 5 described his growth in confidence through acting by stating,

Before I took the acting course, I was one of those people who was really shy and

who kept their ears in the open. I stayed entirely to myself. I would be one of

those people who always sat by themselves and people were like, "Who is that

guy?" Ever since I took this acting course, I understand that I'm my own person

and I may have my own different beliefs, my own opinions and that I shouldn't let

that prevent me from going out and trying to communicate with others. Try and

make friends and be a part of something. Ever since this semester, I've been so

much happier with myself. I've talked to so many new people that I've never

thought I would talk to before. I feel happy.

Student 6 agreed and described her growth in confidence through acting,

I was not definitely as confident in myself, in my speaking, or necessarily in

having a conversation with someone and holding eye contact and being good at

keeping a conversation going. It had a lot to do with my confidence in myself.

Student 7 concurred, "It gives you more confidence in the sense where you're like, okay,

no, like I do know what to say. If I mess up in any form of public speaking, I can get

myself back on track." In the focus group discussion, Student 7 expanded on her earlier statement,

> I definitely agree with the fact that acting helps develop confidence because--
> Wow, I just had a mental revelation because with acting classes, it teaches you
> how to build confidence to walk in an audition room and you also need
> confidence to get those first words out and to stand on the stage in front of people
> and be able to perform.

Student 8 shared his perception on a beginning acting class developing his confidence,

> Yes, so in terms of the influence of the beginning acting class, for me personally,
> like looking back on it, it altogether made me much more self-aware and much
> more present and confident with myself in terms of whatever situation, staging if
> you will, whatever the setting is for myself personally. Whether it be on stage or
> going into a job interview or just simply having the confidence to put out
> applications, whether for auditions or for gigs or jobs and all that.

> In the focus group discussion, the participants, once again, shared their

perceptions of the influence an acting class played on their verbal communication skills developed after they have had some time to reflect on their experience. Student 7 shared an example of how acting helped in her verbal communication skills development.

> Well, I had time to reflect definitely because recently, I was asked by a professor
> to lead warmups for a huge group of people. I can definitely say before all these
> acting classes that I've taken; I probably would've started crying. Definitely.
> Social anxiety, terrible. Acting helped me with my verbal communication skills
> and getting used to having to be a presence in a mix of a bunch of people.

Student 2 also gave an example of how acting influenced her verbal skills development.

Since we last spoke, I've also had time to reflect. I recently did a presentation actually on a project that I did get a very good grade on and I remember reading my teachers comments and she definitely really did praise my verbal communication skills and how I spoke to the audience and everything and I'd like to think that it was because of these acting classes that it made me comfortable enough to actually go up in front of the class and be able to communicate with them properly learn how to project and everything and really be passionate about what I'm talking about, which is all that I've learned in acting.

However, Student 4 disagreed with the other participants regarding his perception of acting developing confidence,

I don't think really necessarily that acting develops your confidence. I feel you develop your confidence. What acting does in my opinion, especially in acting class, is it forces you to face what your confidence is. You have to say, "This is exactly how my confidence is lacking." And it puts you in the best position to overcome your issues with your confidence. That's how I see it.

The focus group was conducted towards the end of the academic semester at Beta University. The week for taking finals in all classes were two weeks away. Student 3 revealed,

I would say that with the semester coming to an end and finals, you have essays or presentations to do, I have one in my one class and the time restraints on the presentation...I feel that I'll be fine with confidently saying what the general idea of the subject is just because of the acting classes.

Student 5 also commented on his experiences at the end of a semester as it related to

Student 3's comments,

> Definitely, my verbal communication skills have helped me in a sense between
>
> our last interview to now is, as students three had said with finals coming up can
>
> be a really stressful time. Most or some people may feel like everything, all the
>
> weight should be only on their shoulders. I'm one of those people who actually
>
> think like that, but I actually did have the confidence to actually reach out to some
>
> of the professors, actually ask for help with some of the finest projects that
>
> they've been handing out and it's definitely helped take off a lot of weight on my
>
> shoulders and I do feel like the actual project itself is a lot easier than I had first
>
> inscribed it to be.

Student 5 was asked if he would have reached out to professors for help with his

classwork before taking an acting class. Student 5 answered, "No, I wouldn't have. I

would've felt like I would have to pretty much try and do this, tackle it head-on by

myself and just hope for the best."

The focus group discussion verified Theme 1, the influence of acting on verbal

communication skills development. There was an agreement in the group discussion that

the process of acting, which includes honesty and repetition, build's an individual's

confidence. And although Student 4 disagreed with the premise of acting building one's

confidence, there was a consensus that confidence did influence each participant's verbal

communication skills development.

Subtheme 1 – Communication Accommodation

The first subtheme of Theme 1 that emerged on the influence of acting on verbal

communication skills development was communication accommodation. As discussed in Chapter 1, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that everyone modifies their way of speaking with whomever they are communicating with (Giles, 2016). CAT is a process that magnifies and reduces communicative differences with speakers during linguistic interactions. In the field of Theatre, communication accommodation is essential in scene work as each actor must be sure that their intentions are clearly understood not only by their scene partner but by the audience.

The first subtheme of Theme 1 emerged from the following codes: communicate, problem, speaking, listen, audience, change, conversation, talked, understanding, practice, specific, and worked (Table 4). The participants shared their perception of accommodating their communication process during scene work rehearsals. Student 3 explained,

> For you to not adjust to whatever your partner does is very selfish to your partner, and it would make for a pretty bad scene, a really awkward situation for both people. You have to adjust the way that you are speaking so that they understand what you're saying.

Student 3's explanation emphasized the code words problem, speaking, listen, and audience. In discussing the importance of communication accommodation between two actors in a scene, Student 1 stated,

> Because I think the importance is that it is a shared scene. It's not your scene. It's both of your scene. If you're overpowering, or if you're doing something in a way where they're not understanding, it's going to throw off the entire scene. It's important for there to be an understanding between the two actors in a scene.

Student 1 stressed the importance of the code word understanding in his explanation. Furthermore, Student 1 shared an example of communication accommodation during a rehearsal for scene work.

> There was one time I was doing a scene with somebody, and they came to me, and they said, 'Hey, you're going a little too fast for me. I can't keep up when it's my turn to speak. It's like, I don't speak that way. I can't speak at that speed'...They asked that I could come down to where they were, and we would be even for them.

The data from Student 1's example of communication accommodation during scene work rehearsal underlined the code words, communicate, specific, worked, and practice.

Student 2 related communication accommodation to acting and stressed the code words conversation and change,

> In acting, if you don't make accommodations for what you're saying, from what your partner is saying, then the scene is not going to work, it is going to fall apart. It won't look good, but then, in general, we can also apply it to life. If you don't make accommodations for what you're saying to emphasize something to who you're going to be talking to, then what you're saying is not going to work. What you're saying could also fall apart.

Student 4 focused on his experience with communication accommodation in acting by sharing a classroom exercise where he played a character named Paul in a scene with a character named Jackie. For this exercise, the instructor had three different females play Jackie to Student 4's character, Paul. Student 4 described how communication accommodation helped with the communication process in each of the scenes with

different actors playing Jackie by emphasizing the importance of having an actor's intentions made clear,

> If I approach all three Jackie's as the same Paul, it wouldn't be real; it wouldn't be authentic; I wouldn't be letting myself respond to exactly who it is and what it is that they are and want in that moment. By me being attentive, I realized that without me trying by just refocusing, listening, and then communicating honestly in response, I became three different Paul's for all of them, in the way that stayed true to myself but stayed true to them as well, to what it is that they were giving me in that moment.

Student 4 further clarified that communication accommodation helped his character, Paul, be clear and precise in what his verbal intentions are in the scene towards the other character, Jackie, but also to the audience as well.

Student 5 also discussed his communication accommodation process when speaking to his professors and compared it with his method when speaking with his friends. He stated, "Yes, I definitely like to talk to professors in a more professional manner versus when I'm with friends, and I can be just silly and talk about whatever." He further explained that the purpose of his communication accommodation is to make sure that his verbal communication skills are understood. Student 5 declared, "Yes, I always want to make sure it's clear."

In the focus group, communication accommodation was a topic of discussion. I asked the participants to comment on the quote, "Communication accommodation and scene work is important for a clear understanding of each actor's verbal intent or purpose." The quote was a topic that emerged during the two in-depth interviews I had

with each of the participants. As I looked around the table, I could sense the participants not understanding what I was asking of them. I then said, "In other words, as each actor communicates with each other, it is important that each actor accommodate their communication so that they speak clearly to get their intentions across."

Student 1 immediately observed,

I think this question is so fitting because you even just had to do it just now. You had to accommodate to us because we were so confused. Yes, since we were just given an example of this, you do have to do that as well in scene work. If your partner is not understanding what you're saying or you're not saying it the way that you think you should be saying it, you do have to make these accommodations and just rethink how you're going to say it or say it a different way so that they can take what you say how you want them to take it and move forward appropriately. In other words, your communications skills need to relay your intentions or purpose for communicating.

There was a common thread that emerged when discussing communication accommodation in the acting process at the interview sessions and the focus group discussion. Each participant's perception of the primary purpose of communication accommodation was to make sure the character's verbal intentions were clear and understood. The participants also emphasized the importance of the audience being able to follow the spoken intentions of each character throughout the show. Most importantly, the data of the participant's perception of the use of communication accommodation in acting verified subtheme 1 of Theme 1, Communication Accommodation.

Theme 2 – Theatre Pedagogy

The second theme that emerged during coding was Theatre pedagogy/Acting. The two elements of theatre pedagogy/acting that I focused on in the research study was improvisation and scene work/roleplay. The second theme emerged from the following codes: theater, improvisation, improv, character, feeling, and playing (Table 4). All the participants in the research study expressed the importance and influence of improvisation and scene work/role play in their verbal communication skills development. In describing his experience with scene work Student 1 emphasized how essential verbal communication skills is to actors who are in a scene together. The story or plot does not advance until both actors, in the scene, move it forward through verbal communication, which relays their intents with each other.

> I feel like doing the scene work was really important for developing verbal communication skills because like I said before, you have to learn to be able to talk to somebody. You're not forced but "forced" to do it. If I was in a situation before where I was in a room with somebody and it was, say, just the two of us, I wouldn't talk to them. This puts you in the situation where you have to, and you're building the story together, it's the collaboration and if you aren't communicating and bringing something to it, then you're really being unfair to other people as well.

Student 1 emphasized that acting includes playing and feeling. Actors dwell within themselves to develop their characters by being honest with their feelings. Moreover, acting may, at times, be defined as playing, but acting is presenting real-life.

In describing her experience in participating with improvisation in a beginning acting class and its influence on her verbal communication skills development, Student 2 explained,

There was an improvisation exercise that I did in a beginning acting class here at the university It was called highs and lows. It was something our teacher taught us. The teacher taught us about improvising using not only our bodies, but we were able to be vocal and make noise.

In the improvisation exercises, Student 2 utilized making sounds as the method for verbal communication. Participants in this exercise would communicate their intentions through varying verbal noise levels. At first glance, this exercise may be seen as playing, but its foundation is learning human emotion and feeling.

Regarding scene work/role play, Student 2 stated, "You have to learn to communicate with another person if you're working with a partner, which is something again, that can definitely be challenging." When asked, which element of acting, improvisation or role play influenced her verbal communication skills the most, Student 2 specified,

Probably role play. I would say role play helped me the most because it teaches me about communicating onstage and offstage, going over what your partner is giving you when you're on the stage with communication verbally and off-stage by discussing what you want to do. It also taught me a lot about communicating with my director to fully understand what my director is looking for. It also teaches me to fully take some time to fully absorb what I'm reading and

understand what I'm reading and what I want to project out there when I'm

verbally communicating in the scene.

Student 2 emphasized the code word character when describing how roleplay

influenced her verbal communication skills. An actor develops a role not only during the

rehearsal process (onstage) but also when they are away from the rehearsal room

(offstage). There was an acknowledgment that a reflection period away from rehearsals

also assists in developing a character. This time of reflection targets critical thinking and

problem-solving skills development for the actor. Student 4 agreed and suggested, "Yes, I

feel that the role playing aspect helped with my verbal communication skills more than

ever."

Student 3 explained the importance of clear and precise verbal communication

skills in improvisation by sharing her experience with the improvisation exercise, Yes,

and. She stated,

An example would be the improvisation exercise Yes, and. Since it is Yes, and,

you must do whatever your partner gives you. You must let them know explicitly

without being so on the nose because once again, you're not going to tell them

"Okay, sit down now." You must find ways to subtly tell them what you want, but

still, be specific and intentional.

The improvisation exercise, Yes, and, promotes spontaneity and creativity. It also teaches

individuals to develop not only their verbal skills but their emotions and feelings.

Student 5's perception on improvisation influencing his verbal communication

skills development focused on warm-up games/exercises,

What definitely helped me the most to enhance my verbal communication skills is

probably the warm-up games that we played in the beginning of the class. Since

it's an 8:30 class, most people are just getting out of bed pretty tired but the

professor, he does warm-up games that actually help wake us up and it also

correlates to improvisation and it helps us with repetition. These games show a lot

of improvisation because it relies on behavior. It relies on communicating with

others and managing to achieve some goal without expressing what it is that

you're hoping to achieve.

The warm-up games/exercises consisted of communicating with non-verbal sounds and

gestures but with real intentions. The repetition of the activity allows each participant to

change their behavior or emotion based on the interaction of other participants.

In the focus group discussion Student 5 continued by sharing another experience

with improvisation,

In our intro to acting class, one of the games that we played was Teacher. With

the way that Teacher is played is five people are randomly selected, and one of

them is a teacher. Their goal is to create some dance, or some wacky movement

and they're supposed to teach the next person in line on how to recreate that

dance or whatever they perform.

Each person watches what the next person does, and they have to try to in a way,

memorize the dance. The person at the end has to teach the person who thought of

the dance what it is that they saw or what they learned from the prior teacher.

That game really helped me with improvisation, because it helps me think

creatively, it helped me think outside the box because before this class, I didn't

really have the ideology to think really creatively. I was an inside-the-box thinker.

I couldn't come up with something on the spot when I was randomly chosen or

anything.

Improvisation not only allowed Student 5 an opportunity to learn and grow creatively;

more importantly, improvisation helped Student 5 with his critical thinking and problem-

solving skills development.

There was a unanimous consensus that the two elements of acting, improvisation

and scene work/role play, had a positive influence on each of the participant's verbal

communication skills development. All the participants in the research study also

expressed the importance and significance that improvisation and scene work/role play

had in their verbal communication skills development. Thus, resulting in everyone

agreeing that Theatre pedagogy was an effective learning tool. Moreover, they were all

like-minded in expressing that improvisation and roleplay are two acting elements that

inspire students, not only to be creative but to develop their character's skills at the same

time they are developing their own life skills in the acting process.

Subtheme 1 – Listening

The first subtheme of Theme 2 that was discovered during coding was listening.

The first subtheme emerged from the following codes words: listening, understand,

personally, and conversation (Table 4). All the participants in the research study

expressed the importance of listening in the communication process. Moreover, the

participants agreed that listening was an important element in verbal communication

skills. Student 1 explained,

It's listening, it's being able to respond, it's all of these various essential verbal

skills I think that are coming into play whenever you're doing a scene. If you're

not listening, you miss your cue line, you don't say your line. It ruins the whole

thing. You have to be able to be in a room with somebody and be able to have that

conversation.

Student 1 emphasized that a conversation between two actors involves listening as well

as understanding. Understanding includes both reaction and emotion. Listening is the

impetus for reaction and emotion in the acting process.

The acting process requires participants to listen when they are involved in scene

work. Student 2 focused on the importance of listening in scene work rehearsals, "It can

be very helpful taking the time, and patience like the director did that one time, and

listening also is a huge part of it. You have to be able to listen to what your partner is

saying what your director wants." Student 2 was stressing the importance of the creative

relationship between an actor and a director. During scene work, the creative process is

stagnant if an actor does not hear the artistic suggestions of a director.

There was also a consensus that listening was an essential tool in improvisation

exercises and scene work. Student 6 concurred and called it a "top element" in

improvisation and scene work. In relating listening to scene work, she suggested, "Yes,

it's the same because if you're not listening, you're not going to know your line. You're

going to be like, I don't know what comes next." Student 7 stated, "Because you can't

really communicate if you're not listening." Student 4 added, "I think it's the most

important thing in conversations and especially in acting, it's important to be listening at

all times to make sure that everybody's on the same page and if not adjust to get on the

same page." This is especially true if actors are involved in a performance over a long period. Actors may become so comfortable with their lines and movement that they take listening for granted and instead of reacting internally, they put themselves on cruise control.

Student 3 shared her perception of the importance of listening by relating it to potential job interviews. She explained, "Listening skills are more important than imagined because they're going to be saying a lot of things in a job interview, giving you the whole spiel of the job and then expecting you to react appropriately." Verbal communication skills development includes learning how to listen and not just hear what people are saying. In a job interview, individuals need to be actively listening and passively hearing. Student 1's perception of the significance of listening in verbal communication skills related it to the job interview process. He said,

Listening because a lot of people will prepare for interviews and they'll be like, "These are the questions they're going to ask, and these are going to be my answers". They aren't always asking the same questions. It's sometimes just a little bit different or sometimes something completely out of left field. If you're sticking to the rigid answers, because you're not listening, that doesn't reflect well on what you're presenting yourself as. I think the listening aspect was the main element that helped me succeed in the job interviews I have been a part of.

Student 1 disclosed that he has been offered employment at every interview he has participated in to date.

In the focus group discussion, all the participants also agreed on the importance of verbal communication skills in improvisation. In his experience, Student 1 related the

importance of listening to succeeding in an improvisation game called Survivor. He
explained,

> Survivor dies if nobody's listening because the way this game works is, there's
> however many people are playing, everybody starts in the scene. They do a full
> scene all the way through, dealing with whatever is happening in the scene. At the
> end of the scene, one person is voted out of the scene. Then they have to do the
> scene again with everything that happened before, as many lines, as many actions
> as they can remember, that happened before, they have to do the exact same thing
> ... It really encourages you to work together and to pay attention and listen and
> communicate strongly with each other.

Student 1 also shared his perception of the importance of listening during the rehearsals
of scene work or being an actor in a show. He warned of the complacency that may set in
during rehearsals or long-run performances where actors become comfortable with their
lines through repetition and stop listening. Student 1 warned,

> Once you become set in it, you stop listening and you're like, "Okay, I'm on
> autopilot." You don't want that to happen. You want to consistently be involved
> in what's going on. You need to be proactive and engages at all times. You need
> to be always listening.

All participants in the focus group discussion approved of Student 1's assessment of
listening when onstage as an actor in a show. They all agreed that acting does teach the
element of listening as part of verbal communication skills development. Most
importantly, it was unanimously recommended that everyone needs to stop passively
hearing and start actively listening in life.

Subtheme 2 – Experiential Learning

The second subtheme of Theatre pedagogy/acting is the experiential learning environment. All beginning acting courses are taught in an experiential learning environment or classroom. The second subtheme emerged from the following codes: experiential, learning, approach, helped, reflect, different, and practice (Table 4).

All the participants agreed that acting should be taught in an experiential learning classroom. The participants also agreed on the importance of teaching acting theories in a traditional learning environment. A blend of a lecture-based environment and an experiential learning environment was suggested by multiple participants. Student 1 stated,

> Well, you could not do an acting course just lecture-based. You could, but it
> would not be productive. You couldn't do it in a traditional learning environment
> because you wouldn't get nearly the same amount of anything out of it because
> it's all about rehearsing and performing and feeling the growth. You need to get
> up from your seat and physically do things in an acting class... I can't even
> imagine a Theatre course being taught in a traditional learning environment.

However, as Student 8 suggested that an experiential learning classroom is essential to teaching acting, as the experiential learning environment "allows the actor to give himself the permission to fail as well as permission to try something." Student 2 added, "The only way you are going to learn it's not just about talking about the verbal exercises or talking about ways to probably communicate. It's getting up and actually just talking and communicating with people." In commenting on the advantages of an experiential learning environment, Student 3 proposed, "Having the class setup like that is good for

the objective of the class like to learn how to be a better actor and then growth and development as a person."

Student 4 also agreed that an experiential learning environment was essential in teaching acting. He suggested, "Acting is human connection, it's learning to portray the human experience authentically, honestly, and that takes being human. It takes experiencing other humans doing that in the same way." Student 4 added,

It puts all the people in the class on the same playing field for us to simply play, and through that play, through that actual physical and intellectual human connection we were able to expand quickly and successfully, because we could feel what was wrong and fix it as opposed to building a textbook.

Student 4 was emphasizing the acting approach, where actors are permitted to play creatively and methodically practice. The human connection approach requires actors to reflect on not only their actions and movements during practice but also on how they delivered their lines. Thus, a form of verbal communication skills development.

In describing his experience in learning acting in an experiential learning classroom, Student 5 stated,

I definitely would say experiential-based is more suiting for me because it's something that I've honestly never experienced before. It's really fun. I feel like-I take away more through experiential learning than I do through lecture based. Because lecture-based it's all professor going on and on about something and then do the work. You got to do it yourself in experiential learning.

Student 7 agreed with Student 5 and added,

Acting is a lot about being in the moment and feeling. You can teach someone

diction and structure and stuff like that, but a lot of acting is feeling and being in

the moment and you can't teach someone how to feel or be in the moment. You

can't really teach someone to be open. You can give them the tools to help them

get there, but you have to actually do it yourself... I feel like experiential learning

environment helps with that because you're constantly in the act of doing. You're

experiencing things hands-on and getting it firsthand and fresh. It's organic.

Student 2 also agreed and shared her perception of teaching acting in an experiential

learning environment,

The pros are definitely that you're getting off your feet and you're learning on the

spot and that can be really beneficial for a lot of people. It's better to just get up

and just do and learn something right off the bat. I know it's definitely how I

learned with acting. I can't just sit and look in a book. I have to be able to get up

and do it and know when I have to change or when I need to or what I can

improve on.

In describing his experience in the Intro to Acting course he is currently taking, Student 5

suggested, "you don't really get the same hands on experience through lecture-based that

you would through movement and through working with other people in an experiential

learning classroom."

The participants agreed that acting is better taught in an experiential learning

environment rather than a lecture room. Another common thread that emerged through

the discussion of an experiential learning environment was that the participants

perception of acting includes emotion. They proposed that emotion and honesty is

essential in acting. Most importantly, learning emotion and honesty cannot occur in a lecture-based classroom. Students need to feel the emotion and honesty through hands-on learning techniques.

Theme 3 – A Prospective Working Life

The third theme that was discovered during coding was the outcome of verbal communication skills on a prospective working life. The third theme emerged from the following codes: important, working, interview, confident, thinking, employment, and future (Table 4). The third theme is also based on the experience of eight undergraduate students who have taken a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (2018b) states that the primary purpose of higher education is the preparation for employment in today's global society. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is essential in all work environments. The participants in the research study provide their perceptions on the influence of a beginning acting class on their verbal communication skills for future employment. The participants provided insight into how an acting class will help them gain employment when they graduate.

In describing his perception on how an acting class will help him gain future employment, Student 1 stated,

> For future employment, I was thinking about it and I had not really had a job
> before acting courses. I never went into any kind of job interview without having
> the influence of acting. It was interesting to me to see that a lot of my friends
> would go and interview for jobs and then they'd come and be like, "Yes, I didn't
> get the job". I've only worked three or four different places. I've only interviewed

three or four different places. I always got the job. I don't know if that's a correlation or if it's just something that happens to happen, but I can't help but notice that that's something that stands out to me is they never did theater, they never took acting courses and they never really found jobs so easily, but I was able to. I think that was because I was prepared to answer questions to go along with whatever was being asked. I think that comes from the improv part of it, is you have to be thinking on your feet. A question gets asked and you're ready to answer.

Student 2's perception on how acting will help gain employment is connected to the importance of verbal communication skills. She suggested,

I do full-heartedly agree that taking a beginning acting class is very much beneficial to helping students with their verbal communication skills in the job field. It is not just for actors it helps with your public speaking skills we know which is essential for almost any job that you are going to have. It can help you communicate to other people when you have to work with somebody else as well. An acting class makes you get out of your own skin, get more out there which is out of your comfort zone, which is something else you'll have to do in the work field one day. There is so many things an acting class will teach you that are essential to being in the workforce.

Student 3 shared the skills she learned in a beginning acting class that would help her gain employment when she graduates. She mentioned, "Confidence, Delivery and Tone, Empathy, and Listening." Student 4 discussed the importance of learning skills for a

potential job interview. He suggested these skills were learned in a beginning acting class and said,

> The class teaches you how to be present in the moment with the people that are involved in that moment, the job interview, and to not spend so much time and energy focusing on just viewing your perspective, but receiving, understanding, grasping what it is that the people around you are offering to you with their presence, and then therefore being able to sit on their information to utilize it in order to return it with a very real response.

Student 5 agreed with Student 4's assessment and added,

> The influence the intro to acting course has had for me, it has enhanced my verbal communication skills significantly ... It's very important for anyone to acquire a strong verbal communication skill to get into any job because when it comes to an interview process, you want to make sure that you can clearly state your intentions or why you want to work for this place, what it is you want to achieve, and the steps you want to take to get to it. To properly explain that to someone who's looking to hire someone, it increases your chances of getting this spot of employment.

In sharing what job skills, she learned in an acting class that would benefit her future job interviews, Student 7 declared,

> I'd have to say an acting class would help you obtain a job in the future because you start to get used to communication with others and different styles, different ways. You start to understand that people communicate in the most abnormal ways that you would never even think about ... Once you get into the room where

you're interviewing for a job, maybe you have a boss that is not as wordy. They

sit back and they're more observant and you're like, "Okay, so now I know I need

to be the one to do most of the talking." You can easily adapt to it. Also, when it

comes to presenting yourself, you're not as timid when presenting yourself.

You're more planted and grounded because you already know how to find your

center from having to do that from scene. I think you just start to understand

people's language a little bit better when you start acting in your own language as

well.

Student 6 shared the strategies she utilizes when she is in a job interview. She professed

that she learned these strategies in all the acting classes she has taken. Student 6 stated,

It's going to be the only reason I'm employed because I'm personable and

because I can be completely honest with people who are interviewing me, and I'm

not going to seem shy and I'm not going to seem extremely outgoing either. I'm

just going to be me, and either they're going to love it or they're going to hate it.

Most of the time, I can tell right off the bat if I've got the job or not just because

of the communication skills because if I can hold eye contact with the person

interviewing me and if I can make them understand why that I would be

significant for this job and why they should choose me. Acting helps you

persuade people in a way almost because-- not faking by any means, but you

become almost like you're interviewing me, but I'm going to help you interview

me because even people who interview me sometimes, I'm like, "Where are your

communication skills? I feel like I'm running the interview here," and that

happens a lot for people who do take acting classes. That's good because you've

got the upper hand, which makes it a lot easier to get the job.

Student 8's perception on how developing his verbal communication skills is going to

assist him obtain a job when he graduates is based on what he learned in acting classes.

He suggested,

In terms of communication skills, I guess it's just having the foresight and just the

intuition to consider things, how things may come across, say, in a cover letter, in

an application what may stand out in terms of significance or make you seem

unique to what whatever they may need or if you're going in for an interview,

what things to address, what not to address. Just how do you present yourself

when you walk in the room. It also invited what we talked about before, the

interview does not begin when you start talking, it starts when you enter the

room?

The impetus for this research study is the research question. Thus, the last

question I asked all the participants in the focus group discussion was the study's

research question,

What are your perceptions of a beginning acting class and the influence it played

on your verbal communication skills development for future employment? In

other words, what influence did a beginning acting class have on the development

of your verbal communication skills so that you feel confident in gaining

employment when you graduate?

Student 4 declared,

Through the acting class, I was able to authentically discover my voice, by discovering it, I was able to gain confidence in it and through that, now I'm able to accommodate it to any situation including work and employment, so I feel like that's what it is. It led me to my voice so that I can use it in any scenario and any situation.

Student 1 added,

As student four said, it helped me find my voice. If I had not taken acting courses, you wouldn't be getting a single answer out of me today. You'd just be getting silence. You would pass to student one and it would just be dead air. I think that the acting courses have helped me open up, discover who I am, discover that voice that I'm able to then use. As an anecdote, over this past summer, I went in for a job interview and halfway through the interview, the interviewer stopped and said, "Are you a theater student?" I think that speaks to how acting helps.

Student 2 stated,

Through the beginning acting courses, what I learned was to be comfortable in my own skin. It brought me out of my shell, I was able to communicate more with my teachers, my classmates and it just made me feel more me, and now I can go into any job interview and be comfortable being myself.

Student 5 shared,

Prior to the intro to acting course, I didn't really think much of myself, I didn't really think I was really all that, but as I was taking this course, I discovered my self-worth, my value that I have. It helped me open up my ideology as to what I want to do in a clear and more organized way. It also has helped me reach out to

others, when, prior to that, I would just keep everything collected within myself

and try and figure out how to do it without any guidance or anything like that. It

just overall helped me open up the door of happiness, peace.

Student 8 explained,

Naturally and directly the same vein as everyone else and looking back on taking

my own beginning acting course with acting one. Again, it's just one of those 180

moments in terms of just seeing the growth of where I was then versus where I am

now. Naturally, you'll always be learning throughout your life, that's part of it,

it's the beauty of it. Looking at where I was then in terms of being actually

confronted with who I am personally with the work itself too, because for me,

before I got confidence, I acted, but the thing is, I was just more about escaping

from everything that was myself, just focusing on the work itself, nothing else.

My freshman year that as we talked about, that came to really, really bite me in

the butt, and with this beginning acting classes, as well as other experiences, I

became to really grow into love myself within the work itself, so the balance of

both that as well. It's been a slow, steady uphill climb, but if it weren't for that, I

wouldn't be where I am now.

Student 3 concluded the discussion by stating,

I think that I would also have to agree with what everyone was saying that the

acting classes, they help you to gain the confidence, but also it makes you aware

of what you're doing that's not beneficial to you in terms of communication and

things like this. It also highlights the good things about you as well, which I think

is really important and it provides that balance of, you're doing this wrong or

you're lacking in this one area but you're also really good at this. That also helps

with confidence and making you more self-aware as a person, which I think a lot

of people that I come in contact with on a daily basis would benefit from being

more self-aware and being more empathetic and listening better. I think that these

sorts of things, you could get directly and are more easily accessible through

acting classes.

Additionally, all the participants agreed that taking an acting class gave them the

skills to bring to all their potential job opportunities. There was a unanimous consensus

that the acting class built each participant's self-confidence. Thus, the confidence allowed

each participant to be themselves in the interview process. Moreover, an acting class

taught them to listen, which is essential in a job interview. All the participants also agreed

that the job interview is a more natural process now after taking an acting class. Most

importantly, all the participant's perception is that an acting class does positively assist an

undergraduate student in gaining future employment.

Summary

The emphasis of Chapter 4 was on the research study data, the data analysis, and

answering the research question. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to

explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their

verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The research

question of this study was, what are undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence

of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for

future employment? This research study explored the perceptions of eight undergraduate

students in a liberal arts university who had taken a beginning acting class. The eight

students participated in two in-depth interview sessions and a focus group discussion. The participants provided rich, thick data on their perception of the influence a beginning acting class played on their verbal communication skills development to gain employment when they graduate.

In answering the research question, there was a unanimous consensus that a beginning acting class helped the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. The participants also agreed that theatre was an effective pedagogical tool as they also gained life skills in the acting class, such as confidence, listening, and interpersonal skills. Moreover, these soft skills that the participants learned in a theatre classroom will enrich them for the rest of their lives. Most importantly, there was one hundred percent agreement among all the participants that an acting class does positively assist an undergraduate student in gaining future employment.

In the data analysis process, answering the research question revealed three themes and three subthemes (Figure 3). These themes and subthemes addressed points of emphasis in the data responding to the research question. The three themes that emerged during the data analysis process were: (a) Theme 1-the influence of acting on verbal communication skills development, (b) Theme 2-theatre pedagogy, and (c) Theme 3-a prospective working life. Additionally, the three subthemes that emerged were: (a) communication accommodation, (b) listening, and (c) experiential learning. The three themes and subthemes that emerged confirmed each participant's perception of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment.

In Chapter 5, I will focus on the interpretations of the study's findings as related to the research question, conceptual framework, and literature review, including how each theme addressed the study's research question. I will describe the limitations of the study, as well as discuss recommendations for further research. Chapter 5 concludes with a description of the implications of the study for positive social change and implications for knowledge in the discipline.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. Through two in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion, I investigated and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the student's verbal communication skills development for potential employment. The phenomenon of interest in this research study was the undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played in their verbal communication skills development that will help them gain a job when they graduate.

The answer to the research question revealed that there was a unanimous consensus among the participants that a beginning acting class helped the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. The participants also agreed that theatre was an effective pedagogical tool as they also gained soft skills in the acting class, such as confidence, listening, and interpersonal skills. Moreover, there was also unanimous consent that these life skills the participants learned in a theatre classroom will enrich them for the rest of their lives. Most importantly, there was one hundred percent agreement among all the participants that an acting class does positively assist an undergraduate student in gaining future employment.

In the data analysis process, answering the research question revealed three themes and three subthemes (Figure 3). These themes and subthemes addressed points of emphasis in the data responding to the research question. The three themes that emerged

during the data analysis process were: (a) Theme 1-the influence of acting on verbal communication skills development, (b) Theme 2-theatre pedagogy, and (c) Theme 3-a prospective working life. Additionally, the three subthemes that emerged were: (a) communication accommodation, (b) listening, and (c) experiential learning. The three themes and subthemes that emerged confirmed each participant's perception of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment.

Chapter 5 begins with my interpretation of the findings as related to the research question. I will then discuss my understanding of the results as relevant to the conceptual framework. I will then follow by discussing my interpretations of the findings as related to the literature review that was presented in Chapter 2. Recommendations for future research will go after a discussion on the limitations of the study. The chapter will conclude with implications for positive social change and knowledge in the field.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research question of this study was, what are undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment? This research study investigated the perceptions of eight undergraduate students in a liberal arts university who had taken a beginning acting class. Moreover, this research study examined the opinions of the eight students on the influence an acting class played on their verbal communication skills development for future employment.

The findings of this research aligned with the literature of the two conceptual frameworks. Additionally, my interpretation of the findings of this research study

confirmed and extended the results of previous research. In this section, I will interpret

the findings of the study, in detail, as they are related to the research question, conceptual

framework, and literature review.

Findings Related to the Research Question

The purpose of this research was to explore and provide insight into how acting

helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required

for future employment. I investigated and analyzed eight undergraduate student's

perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played in their verbal

communication skills development for future work. The phenomenon of interest was the

participant's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in their verbal

communication skills development and how that would assist in procuring a job when

they graduate. The research question of this study was, what are undergraduate student's

perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their

verbal communication skills for future employment?

The first significant finding was the influence of confidence on undergraduate

student's verbal communication skills development. The data revealed that learning the

art of acting was not the only skill gained in a beginning acting class. Students also

learned the soft skill, confidence, in a beginning acting class. There was an overwhelming

consensus from all the participants that confidence was acquired after taking a beginning

acting class. Each participant asserted comments such as, "It gave me the confidence...,"

"It definitely helped me with confidence...," "Confidence is needed in all of the things we

do...," Definitely confidence...," It had a lot to do with the confidence in myself...," "It

gives you more confidence...," "...much more present and confident in myself." Each

participant acknowledged that they would not have furthered their verbal communication skills development if not for the self-confidence that was bestowed on them in an acting class. The growth of confidence, in each of the participants, was not only the impetus for their verbal communication skills development progression but the foundation as well.

Additionally, the data from the findings, specifically on the influence of self-confidence on student's verbal communication skills development progression, also revealed instances where participants advanced their soft skills after taking an acting class. One participant was recently asked to take the lead in an improvisation exercise in front of a group of people. The participant did not hesitate to lead the activity, but rather, accepted the challenge willingly. More importantly, according to the participant, she led the exercise with self-assurance. Another participant professed that she gave a presentation in front of a class. The participant acknowledged that she has a learning and speaking disability; however, in this presentation, her teachers specifically praised her verbal communication skills. The participant attributes her self-confidence as the reason for a successful performance. A third participant was able to approach a professor and ask for assistance with his final project. Before taking an acting class, the participant revealed that he would have tried completing the project by himself and "hope for the best" as he was not comfortable approaching people with authority. The self-confidence he gained in an acting class was what helped this participant not only contact the professor but also ask for his advice and assistance with the project. Thus, the experience of taking a beginning acting class and the soft skill, confidence, that the participants gained in a theatre classroom enriched their lives holistically.

The second significant finding of this study was again seen in the theme of

confidence. The finding focused on participants' perceptions of the influence self-confidence played in their verbal communication skills development. The self-confidence gained by taking a beginning acting class was the foundation for additional personal skills development in the participants. Three participants, in this research, acknowledged that they were shy and solitary people before taking an acting class. They also admitted that they were not comfortable with themselves. Building their self-confidence in an acting class helped them become a better person by being able to be themselves. Confidence was the impetus for them finding, not only their voice but who they were.

Additionally, one of the participants confessed that they were treated for social anxiety disorder and that taking acting classes has helped with their social anxiety. Confidence helped the participant face their social anxiety head-on. The participants overwhelmingly identified a beginning acting class as having improved their lives holistically and, more importantly, made their undergraduate years a positive journey.

The third significant finding of this study was centered around the influence of a beginning acting class. The finding focused on participant's perceptions of the influence of an acting class played on their verbal communication skills development. The essential purpose of communication is to convey an intention. The participants agreed that communication is an experience between two or more people, and communication must be understandable and honest with clear intentions. Communication needs to be a two-way street where all participants in the dialog need to put forth an equal amount of effort to attain a clear and honest interaction. Communication accommodation was essential in achieving this precise and authentic interaction. There was a unanimous consensus that delivering clear and sincere interaction was a requirement in both verbal and non-verbal

communication. Listening was a crucial element of communication that everyone agreed needed to be highlighted.

All the participants in the research study expressed the importance of listening in the communication process. They stressed that whether it be improvisation, scene work, or classroom exercises, listening was vital in understanding their partner's intentions. The participants also agreed that listening was an essential element in verbal communication skills development. Most importantly, there was agreement that acting does teach the aspect of listening as part of verbal communication skills development. In performing and real life, it was unanimously recommended that everyone needs to stop passively hearing and start actively listening.

The fourth significant finding once again focused on participants' perceptions of the influence an acting class played in their verbal communication skills development. Honesty was expressed frequently by participants in the research study when discussing the influence an acting class played on their verbal communication skill development. An acting class teaches students how to communicate in a genuine manner. Participants, in the research, believed that an actor must communicate their lines in a script with honesty to fulfill their intentions. Being transparent and delivering their lines with emotion was essential in having communication being honest. There was unanimous consent from the participants that an audience can determine if an actor was merely reciting words from a script or being a character, from the script, delivering honest dialogue. There was also overwhelming consent that interviewers can identify an interviewee that is not having a candid conversation when applying for a job in the interview process. Participants in the research suggested that learning to deliver their lines genuinely was also advancing

honesty in their verbal communication skills development.

The final significant finding of this study centered around obtaining employment upon graduating. The findings on this topic focused on participant's perceptions of the influence a beginning acting class played in their verbal communication skills development for future employment. Participant's overwhelmingly identified interview skills they had learned in an acting class that would not only help them when applying for work when they graduate but takes with them to all their potential job opportunities.

There was a unanimous consensus that the acting class built each participant's self-confidence. The confidence, in turn, allowed each participant to be themselves in the interview process. Being self-confident was the foundation for each participant to find the truth in themselves and accept who they are as an individual. Each participant in the research identified self-confidence as a crucial element when seeking employment. Moreover, all the participants attributed their self-confidence development to the beginning acting class.

Another trait and skill that an acting class taught students that would help in the employment interview process is the blending of self-confidence with non-verbal communication skills. Participants in this study asserted that an acting course teaches students the art and skills of auditioning. Students learn how to walk into an audition space and present themselves truthfully. Moreover, they are trained to display confidence, have energy, be engaging, and be honest throughout the audition process. Showing confidence, having energy, being engaging, and being honest is also essential and vital in a job interview. There was unanimous consent that an acting class could be considered a preparatory course for job interviews.

Listening was a trait that the participants overwhelmingly agreed was taught in a beginning acting class. As listening is crucial in communication, each participant identified listening as essential in a job interview. Most importantly, everyone concurred that an acting class taught them the importance of listening. From learning how to actively listen, rather than passively hear, every participant in this research study asserted that the job interview is a more natural process now after taking an acting class. They also agreed that the acting class taught them skills that would help them in the job interview process for the rest of their lives.

In summary, the research question of this study was, what are undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment? The student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in their verbal communication skills development to obtain a job when they graduate can be summed up in this way. A beginning acting class introduces students to the art of acting. While taking this creative journey, students gain a soft skill, confidence, that becomes the foundation for the students' verbal communication skills development progression. Students then build their self-confidence in an acting class, which helps them become a better person by being able to be themselves. Confidence was the impetus for them finding, not only their voice but who they were.

Students who now possess self-confidence allowed themselves to be creative and honest in their communication skills in the two elements of acting, improvisation and scene work. Through rehearsal and repetition, in an acting class, the students worked on both their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. An additional aspect of

communication that students also addressed when working on their oral communication skills was listening and communication accommodation. Students learned that listening is a competence that is essential in all communication to relay and receive the exact intentions. Students also learned that communication needs to be a two-way street where all participants in the dialog need to put forth an equal amount of effort to attain a transparent and honest interaction. Students in an acting class gained knowledge of the importance of listening and communication accommodation to achieve this precise and authentic verbal interaction.

The competencies that were learned and gained in a beginning acting class were confidence, verbal communication skills, listening, communication accommodation, truthfulness, and teamwork. Participant's overwhelmingly identified these competencies as interview skills they had learned in an acting class that would not only help them when applying for work when they graduate but takes with them to all their potential job opportunities in the future. There was also a unanimous consensus that a beginning acting class helped the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. Most importantly, there was also one hundred percent agreement among all the participant's perceptions that an acting class does positively influence an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills development so they can gain future employment.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework and foundation for this research study were Kolb's Experiential Theory and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory. The study was viewed through two conceptual lenses, along with the selected concepts of acting, improvisation and roleplay/simulation. These selected concepts of acting supplemented

the conceptual framework.

The findings related to the Experiential Learning Theory will be discussed first. Kolb (2015) asserted that learning is a process of developing knowledge through experience. Experiential learning emphasizes the process of learning rather than the outcomes of education by connecting the gap between theory and practice (Kolb et al., 2014; Tomkins & Ulus, 2016; van Rensburg et al., 2018; Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). The Experiential Learning Theory is a process of developing knowledge through the transformation of an individual's experience (Kolb, 2015). Experiential learning is the act of doing, then reflecting, and then doing it over again. Participants in this study asserted that learning the acting craft in an experiential learning environment was essential to their understanding of acting theories. The fundamentals of acting may be taught in a lecture-based or traditional learning classroom. However, the participants in this study all agreed that students in acting classes need to get up from their classroom seats and physically participate in the acting process to learn the fundamentals of the craft. In the focus group, the participants discussed the importance of having a hands-on method to learn an acting theory. They suggested that various fields require physical involvement to supplement learning; science courses conducted experiments, in math courses addition and division were completed, and in acting classes, physical and vocal participation was required. There was a unanimous consensus that the physical and vocal engagement in acting class was a method of showing what was learned from an acting theory. Moreover, the physical and vocal participation in acting classes allowed students to encounter an experience that enabled them to enter the Experiential Learning Cycle.

The acting and rehearsal process is a cyclical process, and it is analogous to the

Experiential Learning Cycle. Kolb (2015) described the Experiential Learning Cycle as beginning with a Concrete Experience stage where the learner encounters a new experience. In acting, this stage begins at rehearsals. Rehearsals are an exploratory period where students try different techniques or manners to achieve a specific objective. These rehearsals can also occur in an acting classroom. The first rehearsal is when students encounter a concrete experience.

After engaging with the new experience, the learner enters the second stage, Reflective Observation, and reviews and reflects on the new experience (Kolb, 2015). In the acting process or classroom, there are multiple rehearsals; thus, the students reflect on what they learned after each rehearsal or classroom period. Through reflection, the learner enters the third stage, Abstract Conceptualization, at which point the learner creates and analyzes a new idea and learns from the experience (Kolb, 2015). The time between rehearsals is the reflective observation and abstract conceptualization period for students in the acting process.

Finally, the last stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is Active Experimentation. This stage occurs after the learner has had time to reflect and critically analyze the new experience. The learner then attempts what they have learned and applies the new knowledge to new incoming experiences. In the rehearsal process and classroom, students re-do their work keeping in mind what they learned from the previous rehearsal and with better understanding. More importantly, students try or experiment with new verbal and physical actions throughout the rehearsal process to reach their acting objective.

Communication Accommodation Theory is the second conceptual framework for

this research study. Giles (2016) posited that the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) describes how individuals adjust their communication when in conversation with another individual to manage to understand each other; while at the same time holding on to their own identity. Accommodation practices in communication are dependent not only on an individual's personality but on their being and essence.

The findings in this research discovered that in the acting process, communication accommodation was essential in both scene work and improvisation. Students in acting classes must be sure that their intentions are clearly understood not only by their scene partner but by the audience. Having clear and understood intentions are also required in improvisation exercises that are accomplished with non-verbal communication techniques. The participants, in this study, all agreed that the objective of scene work and improvisation was clear, effective communication with well-defined intentions. Communication accommodation assisted in achieving this objective. Moreover, each participant's perception of the primary purpose of communication accommodation was to make sure the character's verbal intentions were clear and understood.

Spolin (1999) proposed that the foundation of improvisation is not only to be spontaneous but to build on what has been said before by adding your creative ideas and from your perspective. The author suggested that the fundamentals of improvisation include thinking on your feet (spontaneity), being specific, and developing timing in execution and intent (Spolin, 1999). In the focus group, the participants shared their experiences with improvisation games and exercises that focused on Spolin's list of improvisation fundamentals. The premise for the improv game, Space Jump, is that two people are in a scene discussing a specific topic. A new person enters the scene and

completely changes the topic of discussion with a new topic. All three people must now begin chatting about the new topic. A fourth and fifth person may enter, and each time the topic of discussion must change. All the elements of improvisation are required for this exercise to be successful. Every person jumping into the "space" must be spontaneous.

Moreover, all participants must be thinking on their feet by carefully listening and being specific with their verbal communication intentions. Everyone in the focus group agreed that timing was also an essential aspect for this game, Space Jump, to succeed. Everyone also agreed that communication accommodation was a critical factor in making sure that all the participants understood the topic of discussion and what each person's intentions were. Accommodating one's communication technique allowed for a two-way communication path that is transparent and understandable.

Another improvisation game that was discussed in the focus group was Highs and Lows. The improvisation focuses on noise variation of a sound or note and non-verbal communication. The vocal sound or note would be passed around all participants, and each time the participant would communicate their intention and emotion through the way they would vocalize the sound or note. Although there is no verbal communication involved in this improv, there was a unanimous consensus in the focus group that non-verbal communication accommodation was essential in this exercise. The communication accommodation process helped each player, in the improv game, clearly deliver their intentions and emotions that are needed for the game to move forward. The participants in the focus group also indicated that listening was a key element throughout Highs and Lows. Communication accommodation is an effective tool not only in verbal

communications but in non-verbal communications as well.

A third improvisation game that was discussed in the focus group was called Teacher. This improv game involves both verbal communication and movement. Five players are randomly chosen from the acting class, and one of them is assigned to be the teacher. The teacher creates a dance with creative, unconventional movements, and then teaches it to the first player. The first player teaches it to the second player and so on until the fifth player is teaching the dance to the teacher, who created the dance. The teaching process goes full circle around all five players, and communication accommodation assists each player in teaching and understanding the premise of the dance being taught at each part of the cycle. The participants in the focus group concurred that this improv game helped each of them gain confidence in themselves as a person and enhanced their creativity. Communication accommodation was critical in making sure each student learned the movements to the dance. Communication accommodation was also essential not only in the verbal communication of learning the dance but the physical movement too.

In this research study, each participant's perception of the primary purpose of communication accommodation was to make sure that an individual's verbal and non-verbal intentions were clear and understood. A person's intentions are critical, whether that individual is a character in a scene or a player in an improv game. There was overwhelming consensus from the participants that communication accommodation was crucial in scene work. Participants stressed the importance of having a clear and open two-way communication path when acting in a scene. Each actor's intentions needed to be clear, and each actor's objective depended on the success of their verbal and non-

verbal communication skills.

The study's participants also emphasized the importance of the audience. It is critical that an audience, in the classroom or a theater, be able to understand the spoken or non-spoken intentions of each character throughout the show or in the classroom. Most importantly, the data of the participant's perception of the use of communication accommodation in acting verified Communication Accommodation as a valuable tool in performance, scene work, and improvisation.

Findings Related to the Literature Review

The first significant finding of this study, as related to the literature review, was centered around experiential learning. Higher education institutions are acknowledging the advantages of experiential learning. They are supporting experiential learning as a compelling pedagogy where students are an active participant in the learning process and take ownership of their education. The findings of this study confirmed and extended the results of prior research on the efficacy of experiential learning (Andres, 2019; Helmefalk & Eklund, 2018; Hien & Oanh, 2018; Kim, 2019; Maguire, 2018; Raja & Najmonnisal, 2018; van Rensburg et al., 2018). Moreover, students in higher education institutions, such as this study's participants, noted an increase in learning motivation when they are in an experiential learning environment. Experiential learning environments allowed the students to explore a topic, reflect on their experiences with the subject, make connections between their experiences and with the issue, and finally, generalize and gain more in-depth knowledge of the topic (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015; Banach et al., 2019; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Moylan et al., 2016; Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). Participants in this research unanimously confirmed that an acting class taught in an

experiential learning environment fostered creativity through practical exploration. Kolb

and Kolb (2005) proposed that the objective of an experiential learning classroom is to

yield a growth-producing experience. Thus, higher education institutions are now

considering the increasing interest in experiential learning and the positive effects it has

on the development of life skills (Banach et al., 2019; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019;

Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). Each of the participants in this study confirmed that an

acting class, taught in an experiential learning environment, had influenced their life

skills development; especially, their verbal communication skills.

The development of a student's communication skills during their undergraduate

years was essential for potential future employment. The review of the literature revealed

that liberal arts higher education institutions are beginning to focus on the development

of a student's cognitive and work skills during their undergraduate learning process

(Banach et al., 2019; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). There was a rise in student interest in

community involvement through service learning; thus, an increase of internship

opportunities in higher education institutions (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019; Cyphert et

al., 2016; Duncan et al., 2017; Fede et al., 2018; Reddick et al., 2018). Internships are

performed in an experiential learning environment (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). Acting

courses in higher education institutions are also taught in an experiential learning

environment.

Another finding of this study, as related to the literature review, focused on the

influence of acting on verbal communication skills development. Prior research

discovered a significant improvement in a student's self-confidence level ratings after an

experiential learning activity (Banach et al., 2019; Barron et al., 2017; Bradberry & De

Maio, 2019; Skinner et al., 2016). The increase in the self-confidence of a student's communication skills supported the authors' suggestion that experiential learning activities are an effective pedagogical tool. This research study confirmed and extended the results of the prior studies as participants in this research also asserted that self-confidence was the impetus for their verbal communication skills development. Bradberry and De Maio (2019) stated that practical experience provides students a higher level of confidence, and students learn the skills that are harder to teach in a traditional classroom.

Participants in this study agreed that building their confidence in an acting class, conducted in an experiential learning classroom, helped them become a better person by being able to be themselves. Confidence was the motivation for them finding, not only their voice but who they were. More importantly, confidence was the foundation of each participant's verbal communication skills development.

The third finding of this study, as related to the literature review, was centered around improvisation and scene work. Results from prior studies concluded that improvisation was a powerful tool in connecting people and building relationships; thus, improvisation was employed as a pedagogical tool in many disciplines (Benjamin, & Kline, 2019; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Kaplan-Liss et al., 2018; Mæland, & Espeland, 2017; Okten & Griffin, 2016; Piccoli, 2018; Romanelli et al., 2017). The authors also suggested that improvisation advanced the participant's communication, listening, and collaboration skills. A beginning acting course uses improvisation as a pedagogical tool in teaching the process of acting. Participants in this research confirmed the previous results of the prior studies as they experienced improvisation in an acting

class. More importantly, they corroborated that improvisation influenced the development of a student's verbal communication skills and listening skills. Participants in this study also suggested that improvisation, at times, allowed them to communicate their intentions through varying verbal noise levels. At first glance, this non-verbal exercise may be viewed as playing, but its foundation is learning human emotion and feeling.

As described in the review of literature, in the Theatre discipline, roleplay or scene work is an acting technique that allows an actor to transform themselves into a character using scripted words (Hagen, 1973). Prior research was conducted on roleplaying or simulation-based learning as an acting technique that influenced the development of cognitive and interpersonal skills in various fields of study (Gordon & Thomas, 2018; Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Neilson & Reeves, 2019; Ulrich et al., 2017). Results from these studies revealed that roleplay/simulation or scene work also encouraged creativity and stimulates the imagination (Heinrich, 2017). Like improvisation, roleplay/simulation and scene work enhanced the development of oral communication skills and listening skills (Hawkins & Tredgett, 2016; Ulrich et al., 2017).

There was a unanimous consensus among this study's participants that improvisation and scene work had a positive influence on each of the participant's verbal communication skills development. Thus, resulting in everyone agreeing that the use of a theatre pedagogy, improvisation and scene work, was an effective learning tool. Moreover, they were all like-minded in expressing that improvisation and scene work inspires students, not only to be creative but to develop their character's skills at the same time they are developing their life skills in the acting process.

An additional finding of this study, as related to the literature review, was the Communication Accommodation Theory. Prior research investigations revealed that the Communication Accommodation Theory played an essential role in the success and effectiveness of an individual's communicating skills during an interaction with another person (Chevalier et al., 2017; Chevalier et al., 2018; Fang, 2017; Gasiorek & Vincze, 2016; Kilgour et al., 2019). The authors suggested that the Communication Accommodation Theory provided an effective framework for understanding the intentions of each speaker when communicating. Moreover, they concluded that communication accommodation advances the context of verbal communication.

The findings from this research study confirmed and extended the results from prior studies. There was unanimous consent from participants in this research that communication accommodation was essential in the acting process. Participants in this study suggested that actors employ an accommodation strategy when acting. They all agreed that an actor adopts accommodation approximation behaviors regarding speaking volume, pace, and intent when involved in scene work. More importantly, there was a unanimous consensus that communication accommodation is essential in scene work as each actor must be sure that their intentions are clearly understood not only by their scene partner but by the audience as well.

The final finding of this study, as related to the literature review, was communication skills training. Prior studies investigated the efficacy of theatre in communication skills training (Duijm et al., 2019; Haugland & Reime, 2018; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Jacob et al., 2019; Moral et al., 2019; Skoglund et al., 2018). The authors proposed that a student's attitude and how they made meaning of their

experiences in communication skills development influenced their learning ability and behavior towards verbal communication skills development. Participants in this research confirmed and extended the findings of prior studies as there was an increase in the student's perception of their ability to communicate after taking a beginning acting class. Participants, in this study, agreed that clear and effective verbal skills were the foundation in all verbal and non-verbal communication. Moreover, they suggested that effective communication is a two-way interaction; however, the interaction requires the willingness of each participant to communicate and understand each other's intentions.

Limitations of the Study

I was the sole researcher in this research study; thus, my research lens and findings were not only subjective, but it was also wholly impartial. The first limitation of the study was that I was honest and always aware of any of my partialities during the data collection process, interpretation process, and data analysis. As a current instructor of theatrical design and someone who has been involved with theatre for over 30 years, I consider myself a product of theatre. I believe in the efficacy of theatre as well as the effectiveness of theatre as a pedagogical tool. Thus, my theatre knowledge and experience needed to be bridled throughout the research study with reasonable care; however, I embraced my being in theatre as part of who I am. Most importantly, I approached this research study not being omniscient but rather open to seeking the truth throughout the exploratory and analysis process.

To ensure truth in the findings, I was diligent and faithful in documenting data precisely what I heard and what I saw. I developed a semi-structured interview protocol, which I followed word for word to uphold objectivity. In the data collection process, I

asked follow-up and extending questions based on the participant's answer to the original query and not from what I thought the answer should be based on my experience with theatre. I also audio-recorded all the in-depth interview sessions and the focus group discussion and used an online transcription service for verbatim transcriptions. Additional steps to ensure impartiality was employing the member checking process of the verbatim transcripts from both individual in-depth interview sessions and the focus group discussion.

A research journal was used throughout my research study to keep all notes and reflections as well as keep me organized throughout the research process. The journal also kept me on track and schedule. Finally, during data analysis, I asked two Theatre scholars to conduct a peer-review of my preliminary and final interpretation and analysis to ensure that my search in this research study was for a public truth and not merely a private truth that I was seeking.

Another limitation of the study is that the findings and interpretations cannot be generalized beyond the context of this research study. Although there are elements of this study that have confirmability with the conclusions in the studies mentioned in the literature review, for a broader population, the results in this study have a limited generalization. However, the participants in this research study did provide a rich, contextual understanding of the influence a beginning acting class played on their verbal communication skills development for future employment. These rich, detailed descriptions helped strengthen the external validity of the research study.

Recommendations

As indicated in Chapter 2, there were limited studies in developing job skills

through theater studies; though researchers and scholars have well documented the importance of theatre and arts in learning and education (Bell, 2016; Greene et al., 2018; Ivory et al., 2016; Li, 2017; McKinney et al., 2018). Moreover, little research existed on teaching effective communication skills through a theatre class offered in higher education institutions. This research study explored and analyzed a sample of undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence an acting class played in the development of their verbal communication skills to help fill the gap in the literature. This study was conducted in the northeastern United States. Additional studies on this topic need to be undertaken as the findings from this research study support further examination in higher education institutions across the country. Beginning acting classes vary in approach from university to university; thus, future studies in higher education institutions in various sectors of the United States is recommended.

The second recommendation has to do with the choice of research methodology. The research approach for this research study was a generic qualitative inquiry. The findings and interpretations in qualitative research are not as generalizable as those of quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Future researchers should consider a quantitative approach at higher education institutions across the nation to determine if the results are statistically significant (Patton, 2015). A quantitative survey of undergraduate students who have or are currently taking a beginning acting class might be conducted to gather information about the student's experiences and perceptions on the influence the course played on their verbal communication skills development for future employment. The quantitative study would assist in determining noticeable features of undergraduate student's experiences and perceptions, regardless of which higher education institution

and program they are enrolled in throughout the country. A mixed-methods research study should also be considered in future studies on this topic.

The third recommendation for future research is conducting a longitudinal study on the influence a beginning acting class played on undergraduate student's verbal communication skills development for future employment. A study with data collected during an undergraduate student's first year and then a follow-up data collection in their final year, before graduating, may provide additional information from what is currently available in the literature. Also, an undergraduate student's perspective on their verbal communication skills development throughout their entire undergraduate journey, after taking an acting class their first year, may further offer data on the effectiveness of theatre as a verbal skills pedagogical tool.

Lastly, future research on the influence an acting class played on undergraduate student's verbal communication skills for future employment should be conducted with participants from various cultures and ethnicity. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I cannot disregard my identity, background, culture, beliefs, and perceptual lens, which I bring with me to the research study. Thus, every individual who participates in a research study beholds and carries their perceptions based on their background, culture, and beliefs. The ethnicity of the participants in this research study was White and African American. Future research should consider using participants with various ethnicities as it may provide data that may be more generalizable to a larger population.

Implications

The findings in this research study may provide information to higher education stakeholders at liberal arts higher education institutions, that theatre is an effective

pedagogical tool in teaching life skills. The results in this study revealed that there was

unanimous consensus among participants that the art of theatre has the power to improve

and enrich human lives. Theatre taught all the participants how to be confident, how to

listen, and how to communicate. These are valuable skills that the participants learned in

a theatre classroom and will enrich them for the rest of their lives after they leave the

class. Moreover, the participants all agreed that a beginning acting class improved their

lives holistically and made their undergraduate years a positive journey.

The findings from this research study may also provide information to liberal arts

higher education institutions regarding their focus on preparing students for future

employment. Colleges and universities need to focus on the development of a student's

cognitive and work skills during their undergraduate learning process. The development

of a student's verbal communication skills is essential to their potential future

employment. Professional development courses and communication courses should not

be the only choices for communication skills development. A basic acting class may

provide students an alternative and additional opportunity to foster their verbal

communication skills. The findings from this research study are based on undergraduate

student's perception of the influence a beginning acting class played on their verbal

communication skills for future employment. A perspective from students may provide

higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal

communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the

institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns regarding the

preparedness of current graduates. Positive social change may come from current

graduates possessing work skills that employers are seeking in their potential employees.

The findings in this research study will add to the body of research on the development of a student's soft skills during their undergraduate school years. The development of a student's soft skills contributes to the development of their verbal communication skills, which employers are seeking in their higher education recruits. As described in Chapter 1, soft skills are an individual's character traits and non-technical skills, such as people skills, conflict resolution skills, verbal communication skills, teamwork skills, and self-awareness. Soft skills are essential not only in the workplace but in everyday life, as well. The soft skills gap is growing in today's employment environments (Tulgan, 2015), specifically, in the hiring process, where employers are finding that graduates lack verbal communication skills (NACE, 2019). The findings of this research study may also benefit students, across educational disciplines, in the potential development of their soft skills, precisely, their verbal communication skills. Oral communication is essential and vital not only in work environments but in all human interactions. Positive social change may come from filling the gap in the literature.

The findings from this research study have implications on an individual level. Undergraduate students who advance their cognition and self-abilities are more apt to assume societal responsibilities in the future and become successful and productive members of their society (Dewey, 1938). Positive social change may come from students who successfully build their verbal communication skills during their collegiate years, find employment after graduation, and become a contributing member in their community (Anatolievna et al., 2017).

Lastly, the findings from this research raise important questions for further discussion and study on reconceiving education as an art. This research study revealed

the effectiveness of Theatre as a pedagogical tool. The process integrates the field of art with the field of education. Moreover, the results of this research also revealed that the art of acting informs the process of learning both life skills and career skills. Thus, theatre pedagogy holds its value by improving the quality of life for its participants. Theatre pedagogy also increases its participant's sensitivity to their surroundings by reshaping their perceptions and values to societal concerns (Brockett & Ball, 2011). The art of acting utilizes learning by doing. In this experiential learning process, teaching and learning become a form of art; thus, art informs both teaching and learning. Therefore, the research findings ask, should theatre pedagogy be the foundation and aim of education? This question not only calls for open discussion but further investigation.

Conclusion

A generic qualitative research study was the instrument to explore, examine, and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. The conceptual framework for this study was Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory. Through these two conceptual lenses, the participants provided answers to the research question for this study: What are undergraduate student's perceptions of the influence of a beginning acting class on the development of their verbal communication skills for future employment? The findings of this study discovered that there was a unanimous consensus from the participants that a beginning acting class helped the development of an undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. Student 1 exemplified it best for everyone, "It helped me find my voice. If I had not taken acting courses, you wouldn't be getting a single answer out of me today. You'd

just be getting silence." Moreover, there was also one hundred percent agreement among all the participants that an acting class does positively assist an undergraduate student in gaining future employment. Student 4 summed it up best, "Through the acting class, I was able to authentically discover my voice, by discovering it, I was able to gain confidence in it, and through that, now I'm able to accommodate it to any situation including work and gaining employment."

Additionally, the findings in this study discovered that a beginning acting class does influence an undergraduate student's verbal communication skill development to assist them in gaining future employment. The conclusions of this research study add to the contributions made by past studies that examined the relationship between theatre and verbal communication skills development. Thus, this research adds to the literature and the field by collecting data from participants in their undergraduate years, whereas most previous studies collected data from participants in postgraduate professional schools such as medical, nursing, dental, and business schools (Chan & Watts, 2017; Dickinson et al., 2016; Jacob et al., 2019).

Most importantly, this research study will add to the body of research on the development of a student's verbal communication skills during their undergraduate school years. The development of a student's verbal communication skills contributes to the development of their soft skills which employers are seeking in their higher education recruits. Liberal arts higher education institutions focus on the development of a student's cognitive and work skills during their undergraduate learning process. The development of a student's verbal communication skills is essential to their potential future employment. Professional development courses and communication courses should not

be the only choices for communication skills development. A basic acting class may provide students additional opportunities to foster their verbal communication skills. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum but to address the employer's current concerns.

To achieve positive social change, undergraduate students need to develop their verbal communication skills during their undergraduate years successfully, find employment upon graduation and become contributing members to society in the future (Dewey, 1938). The results of this research also discovered that an acting class develops confidence in a student. The confidence, in turn, is the impetus that motivates the students to develop their work skills during their undergraduate years to gain employment when they graduate. Gaining employment is the first step in creating a prospective working life, which then leads to becoming a contributing member of the community. Thus, the data in this research study discovered that acting is an effective pedagogical tool. A beginning acting class not only bestows competencies to students to become life-ready, but it also provides students skills to become career-ready as well.

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Appendix A: E-mail to Professor of the Acting Class at Beta University

Hello Professor,

As per our discussion yesterday, I am forwarding some background information on my dissertation research study. I also have a flyer for you to pass out to the class prior to my visitation to recruit participants. I will give you the flyers at tomorrow's 11:00 am meeting. When would be a good time in the next few weeks to possibly stop by, towards the beginning or the end of your class, to introduce my research study and recruit participants? Please let me know what works best for you.

The title of my dissertation is "The perceived influence of an acting class on students' verbal communication skills." The primary purpose of my generic qualitative study is understanding the constructed meaning of the undergraduate student's lives and experience in a beginning acting class for non-majors; more importantly, how they make sense of it. More specifically, I will investigate the perceptions on how the undergraduate students make meaning of the influence a beginning acting class for non-majors play in the development of their verbal communication skills.

I am seeking 8-10 students from the Introduction to Acting class, GAH 2246, to participate in my qualitative research study; with the hope that at least eight accept the invitation. All participants of the study will be assigned pseudonyms to remain anonymous. I am seeking volunteer participants for the study. I am not going to use any class time for the collection of data. As the participants are volunteering their time for two in-depth face-to-face interviews (each interview to last 60-90 minutes) and a focus group discussion (60-90 minutes), I will offer each participant a $30.00 Visa gift card as a thank you for their participation in my research study.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity in allowing me to visit your class and recruit participants for my dissertation research study.
Venustiano

Appendix B: Letter of Recruitment-Beta University

An Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Hello, Introduction, to Acting Class Member,

My name is Venustiano Borromeo. I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently working on my dissertation; whose topic is the perceived influence of an acting class on students' verbal communication skills. The purpose of my generic qualitative study is to explore and provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. I will explore and analyze how undergraduate students, in a higher education institution, interpret, construct, and make meaning of their experiences in a non-major beginning acting class and the influence the course played in the student's verbal communication skills development. A perspective from students may provide higher education stakeholders an opportunity to not only incorporate alternative verbal communication skills development strategies for undergraduate students into the institution's curriculum. Also, the implementation of an acting course into liberal arts education curriculums may provide students more options for developing the oral communication skills needed in the 21st-century job market that is lacking in today's graduates.

I am seeking 8-10 students from the Introduction to Acting class to participate in my qualitative research study voluntarily. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to meet **three times** (twice for individual interviews, and once for a focus group) each session may last 60-90 minutes. All the sessions will be digitally audio-recorded, and the recordings will be transcribed. **Your participation in this study will be anonymous** and you will be assigned a pseudonym if you decide to participate.

Participation in this research study will require three (3) meetings, which I will work around your availability:

- I will schedule an **initial interview** with you starting **the week of November 4, 2019**.

- A **follow-up interview** will also be scheduled with you and take place **the week of November 18, 2019**.

- The **focus group discussion** is scheduled for **Saturday, December 7, 2019 at 10:00 am** but this is a flexible date/time and can be rescheduled based on all the participant's availability.

As you are volunteering your time for the two in-depth face-to-face interviews (each interview to last 60-90 minutes) and a focus group discussion (60-90 minutes), **I will offer each participant a $30.00 Visa gift card as a thank you for your participation in my research study.**

If you would like to participate in the study or have any questions about the study, please contact me at:

- E-mail: **venustiano.borromeo@betauniversity.edu**
- Cell. Phone: **(012) 345-6789**. Please leave a voice message, and I will return your call as soon as I can. You can also text me your e-mail address and we can communicate through e-mail.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.
Venustiano Borromeo

Beta University IRB Approval: 2019.194

*Walden University IRB Approval: 10-08-19-0365539*5

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a study exploring the perceived influence of a beginning acting class on undergraduate student's verbal communication skills. In conducting this study, I hope to provide insight into how acting helps undergraduate students improve their verbal communication skills that are required for future employment. Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary.

If you decide to participate, you can expect the following: you will participate in two (2) face-to-face in-depth interviews and one (1) focus group discussion. Each interview and focus group discussion will last 60-90 minutes. Your total time to participate in this research will be a total of approximately 3-4.5 hours.

Participation in this research poses no risk to participants.

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study. However, as you are volunteering 3 hours of your time, I am gifting you a $30.00 Visa gift card as a thank you for participating in this research study. The gift card will be distributed after the focus group discussion.

Please be aware that any information that is obtained in conjunction with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed at any time except with your permission. You will be assigned a pseudonym (i.e. Student 1, Student 2) which you will then be referred as throughout the research study. Your identity will not be mentioned, nor used in the interviews and the focus group discussion. The information from the interviews and my data analysis will be stored on a laptop that is used exclusively for my dissertation research study. I am the sole user of the computer. The computer is password protected and kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. My dissertation committee and I will be the only viewers of the data collected in my research. I will take all precautionary measures to protect you in this research study. The data will be stored on my dissertation research study laptop for five (5) years upon which time I will delete all the data.

Your decision whether to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Beta University.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask. If you have any additional questions after completing the experiment, please contact the principal investigator, who will be happy to answer any of them. I, Venustiano Borromeo, am the principal investigator on this project. I can be reached by telephone at (012) 345-6789 or emailing me at venustiano.borromeo@betauniversity.edu

By marking the appropriate circle, you are indicating that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Yes.   I would like to participate.   **No.**   I would not like to participate.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read the entire information about the research study, research risks, benefits and the alternatives, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed.
All my questions about this form or this study have been answered and I agree to volunteer to participate in the study.

Subject Name:

_____

Subject Signature: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Principal Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Beta University IRB Approval: 2019.194

Walden University IRB Approval: 10-08-19-0365395

Appendix D: Initial In-Depth Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to share your thoughts with me regarding your experience in a beginning acting class. In addition to recording our interview with digital audio equipment, I will also be taking notes of our discussion. If you have any objection to being audio-recorded, please let me know now, and I will only take notes of our interview.

All names in this research study will be kept confidential. I will use pseudonyms in my field notes, transcripts, and reports. Your alias will be Student 1. All data from this research study will be stored on my personal laptop for at least five years; I will then delete all the recorded data from this research.

The questions I will be asking are open-ended questions. Please feel free and comfortable to answer the questions honestly in any manner you wish.

For your information, the purpose of this generic qualitative study is to explore and provide insight into how a beginning acting class for non-majors, in a liberal arts university, helps undergraduate students make meaning of their communication skills development. As we will have two face-to-face interviews, with this being the first one, I will focus today's discussion on background information. Let us begin.

Questions

1. How did you perceive your verbal communication skills before taking a beginning acting class?

    a. How did you come to that conclusion? What is the gauge you used in determining your verbal communication skill level?

      b.   Probing and extending questions will follow

2. What are your perceptions on the influence the beginning acting class has had on your verbal communication skills?

      a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

3. Would you please share some examples on how a beginning acting class influenced the development of your verbal communication skills?

      a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

4. The two acting elements focused in a beginning acting class are improvisation and roleplay or scene work. Which of the two acting elements helped you the most in improving your verbal communication skills?

      a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

5. Describe your experiences with improvisation and its impact on your verbal communication skills?

      a.   Which improvisation exercise or games, if any, homed in on improving your verbal communication skills?

      b.   Probing and extending questions will follow

6. Describe your experiences with roleplaying or scene work; specifically, how rehearsing your scenes may have influenced you to work on your oral communication skills.

      a.   What element of scene work or roleplaying, if any, specifically targeted your use of verbal communication skills?

      b.   Probing and extending questions will follow

7. How do you perceive the importance of verbal communication skills development in relation to seeking and obtaining employment when you graduate?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

8. How do you perceive the experiences in this acting class with helping you get a job in the future?

    a. Please share some experiences in the class that advanced your verbal communication skills so you can procure employment in the future.

    b. Probing and extending questions will follow

9. Now that we have discussed your verbal communication skills development, how do you perceive the state of your verbal communication skills now, upon reflection, after being in a beginning acting class?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

10. As we conclude this interview, is there anything else you'd like to add to this conversation regarding the influence of an acting class on your verbal communications skills? Just to tie everything up.

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

Closure

Thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with me and share and discuss your experiences in a beginning acting class. I will be sending a transcript of our interview, today, for you to review soon. Please review the document as I will be referring to it when we meet for our follow-up interview next week.

Please feel free to contact me at any time before our next meeting. Speaking of, can we meet next week at the same time? What day and time is convenient for you?

Thank you again for your participation in this research study. I look forward to speaking with you again next week. Have a nice day.

Appendix E: In-Depth Follow-Up Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you, again, for agreeing to share your thoughts with me regarding your experience in a beginning acting class.

Once again, I want to remind you that the questions I will be asking are open-ended questions. So please feel free and comfortable to answer the questions honestly in any manner you wish. There are no correct or wrong answers. I am using our discussion to explore and provide insight into how a beginning acting class in a liberal arts university, helps undergraduate students make meaning of their communication skills development for future employment.

Today's discussion will focus on your experience in a beginning acting class now that you have had time to reflect. I will also use our discussion, today, to follow-up on some of your answers from our first interview. Let us begin.

Questions

1. As some time has passed since we last spoke and you have had some time to reflect on our initial interview, would you please share your perceptions on the influenced a beginning acting class played on the development of your verbal communication skills for future employment?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

2. Please describe the progress of your verbal communication skill from when you started the class until now, today.

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

3. Given what you have just shared about your experience in the acting class, what element of improvisation do you perceive as contributing the most towards your verbal communication skills development?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

4. Would you please share a specific example during improvisation that targeted the development of your verbal communication skills?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

5. Please tell me about a specific instance during improvisation when you recognized a moment of change in your verbal communication skills?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

6. What aspect of scene work or role play do you perceive as contributing the most to your verbal communication skills development?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

7. Would you please share a specific example during scene work or role play that targeted the development of your verbal communication skills?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

8. Please tell me about a specific instance during roleplay or scene work when you recognized a moment of change in your verbal communication skills?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

9. If you were to choose one element of acting that specifically impacted your verbal communication skills development, what would it be and why?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

10. Would you please share your definition of experiential learning?

11. Please share your thoughts on how an experiential learning environment helps in an acting class.

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

12. What are your perceptions on an experiential learning environment helping in verbal communication skills development in an acting class?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

13. When you are doing scene work with a partner, do you accommodate or make any adjustments in your communication so that your partner can attune to your communication?

14. Why do you make these adjustments in your communication delivery? What is your purpose in accommodating your communication when doing scene work?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

15. Would you please share an example of accommodating your communication during scene work? Did accommodating your communication work or not? Did you achieve your purpose?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

16. How do you see this course helping you get employment in today's global job market? What skills did you learn that would help get you a job when you graduate?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

17. How is developing your verbal communication skills going to assist you obtain a job when you graduate?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

18. Would you please give me an example on where in the employment process you

would use effective verbal communication skills?

    a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

19. As we conclude our in-depth interview process, would you please share any final

thoughts or perceptions on the influence of a beginning acting class on the

development of your verbal communication skills for future employment.

Closure

Thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with me and share and discuss

your experiences in a beginning acting class. Just as I did after our first interview, I will

be sending a transcript of today's interview for you to review soon. Please review the

document as I will be referring to it when we meet for our Focus Group Discussion with

the other participants in the study.

Please continue to reflect on the influence a beginning acting class has had on

your verbal communication skills for future employment.

Also. please feel free to contact me at any time before our next meeting. Speaking

of, can we meet next Friday afternoon for the Focus Group Discussion? I will e-mail you

details once I confirm that all the participants are available to meet.

Thank you again for your participation and have a nice day.

Appendix F: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Introduction

First and foremost, I want to thank all of you, once again, for taking part in this research study. I have already met with all of you twice for our individual interviews; however, today we meet as a group.

Focus groups are a discussion with a group of individuals who previously have had some shared experience. The shared experience we will be discussing today is your experience in a beginning acting class at Beta University. It is my hope that someone's response in this focus group discussion may trigger someone's else's memory who may have left out something they wanted to share at the individual interviews but forgot or did not have a chance to share their thoughts. Most importantly, we have all had time to reflect on our two previous interviews and now would be an opportunity to add to the topic and conversation what may have been left out in those prior two individual interviews.

The name on your name tags is the pseudonym that was assigned to you at our one-on-one sessions. For transcription purposes, I will recognize or say your student number prior to you answering and contributing to the discussion. I will also ask that we pass the audio recorder around to the person that is speaking to clearly record their response.

As with our individual interviews, I ask that you please feel free to speak freely and honestly throughout our group discussion. I will be asking open-ended questions and hope you all feel comfortable enough to interject any ideas or thoughts you may have as we converse on multiple topics in our discussion today.

Let us begin.

Questions

1. As there has been some time since we last spoke individually, what things have you reflected on regarding your experience in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played on your verbal communication skills development? Please focus on verbal communication skills development.

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

2. If I were to ask you to focus on potential employment strategies such as employment skills training, same question but with a caveat, how do you perceive your experience in a beginning acting class and the influence the course played on your verbal communication skills development, specifically, for future employment?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

3. How is developing your verbal communication skills going to help you gain future employment?

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

4. Which element of improvisation do you perceive as having the most impact on the development of your verbal communication skill? Please share a specific improvisation game or exercise.

    a. Probing and extending questions will follow

5. Which element of roleplaying, do you perceive as having the most impact on the development of your verbal communication skill? Please share a specific moment in roleplay.

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

6. What are your perceptions of an acting class being taught in an experiential learning environment? What are the pros and cons of teaching acting in an experiential learning classroom as compared to a traditional lecture-based classroom?

   a. Probing and extending questions will follow

7. I want to share with you some of the things that were shared during the individual interview sessions. I have listed them down and ask that you take a few moments to reflect on them. I would then like to discuss them as a group.

(Probing and extending questions will follow each topic)

   a. Acting develops your Confidence

   b. Acting and Honesty go together with Communication

   c. Communication is vital in Acting and in Employment

   d. Both Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication is essential in Improvisation and Employment

   e. Communication Spontaneity in Improvisation equals Communication Spontaneity in Real-Life

   f. Communication accommodation in Scene-Work is important for clearer understanding of each actor's verbal intent or purpose

   g. Verbal Communication Skills include Listening

   h. Repetition is essential in developing acting skills as well as verbal communication skills

       i.   Developing your Verbal Communication Skills also develops your confidence in pursuing employment

       j.   Verbal Communication Skills is vital to succeeding in Life and Employment

8. What are your thoughts on liberal arts higher education institutions providing students additional opportunities, such as a basic acting course, to foster or advance their verbal communication skills?

       a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

9. Based on your experiences in a beginning acting class, and the influence it played on your verbal communication skills development, what advice would you offer to the next group of incoming freshmen at this university regarding developing their verbal communication skills throughout their undergraduate journey?

       a.   Probing and extending questions will follow

10. Before we end today's group discussion, would everyone please share your final thoughts on your experience in a beginning acting class and the influence it played on your verbal communication skills development for future employment?

Closure

I want to thank all of you for your time and willingness to share your experiences throughout this research study. As I did in the last two interviews, I will be sending a transcript of today's Focus Group Discussion, via e-mail, for you to review soon. Also, please continue to feel free to contact me at any time with any questions or concerns. Most importantly, I want to thank all of you for participating in my dissertation research and being part of my doctoral journey.

Appendix G: Course Syllabus

Introduction to Acting
FALL 2019

Course Description: Acting is both an art and a craft. It reflects and responds to life through the multiple perspectives of the playwright, the director, the designers, and the actor her or himself. Its ultimate purpose is to communicate a story, idea, message, and the human condition to an audience. This requires knowledge, creativity and vision. It also requires practical skills. Above all, as a collective art form, it requires the ability to work collaboratively for the good of the whole: to serve a story.

Class Meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:30am-10:20am.

How to contact professor: best by email at: professor@betauniversity.edu
                                Office phone is (000) 123-4567

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00am-12:00pm. Other times by appointment. Ensure an opportunity to meet by scheduling an appointment by email. I have an open-door policy and I am very accessible outside of regularly scheduled class meetings; so, feel free to drop by.

ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES
This course is designed to give participants an introduction to the art of acting and the performance process.

1. Creativity and Innovation: Students will develop their imagination, creativity, concentration, and inter- and intra-personal awareness to create performances. (Essential)
   The ability to generate ideas, take risks, and recognize opportunities in problem-solving, relationships, or self-expression.

2. Adapting to Change: Through improvisation students will increase their ability to engage and navigate new or unfamiliar circumstances. (Important)
   The ability to successfully engage and navigate new or unfamiliar circumstances or create opportunities.

3. Communication Skill: Students will express themselves orally, through presentations and performances, and in writing through the acting journal. (Important)
   The ability to create and share ideas and knowledge effectively with diverse audiences and in various formats.

4. Teamwork and Collaboration: All exercises, presentations and performances include strategies for, and assessment of, effective collaboration with teammates and partners. (Important)
The ability to join with others to achieve a common goal.

GRADING

Syllabus Quiz   6%
(Quiz may be re-taken until desired grade is achieved.)
Journals   (4)   10% (2.5% each)
(Journal assignments are written reflections and vlogs about your progress with specific class exercises and assignments. Therefore, journal assignments will be posted to Bb after its correlating exercise or assignment has been covered.)
One-on-One Meeting 4%
(Students will attend a one-on-one meeting with the course instructor at the start of the semester to discuss how course objectives may support personal and professional goals.)
Department Production Attendance   7% (3.5% for each production)
(Signed ticket stub or receipt required as proof of attendance. Production details below. If you are involved in either production, please see me with any questions about this assignment.)
Scene Preparation   5%
(Students will submit details for their assigned scene. Details will be available on Bb and discussed in class later in the semester.)
Scene (2 showings)   25% (1st Showing 10%; 2nd Showing 15%)
(Detailed grading rubric available on Bb)
Class Participation   45%
(Participation is defined by an active engagement in class by taking copious notes, active listening, sharing observations, contributing to class discussions, asking meaningful questions, and [most importantly] being prepared for in-class assignments. Participation grades will be posted to Bb frequently.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts: Assigned readings will be made available thru Blackboard. Scene readings will be assigned later in the semester.

Blackboard: Students have access through Blackboard (Bb) for all courses in which they are enrolled. Bb is heavily used for announcements and assignments. Students are expected to check Bb and email daily.

Assignment Submissions:
All assignments will be submitted through Bb under the Assignments tab. Please understand that late submissions face points/percentages deducted each day late. Emailed submissions will not be accepted.

Journal/Notebook:
It is required that each student has a journal or notebook to record observations and notes during class. Computers/Smart Phones may not be used for notetaking during class, unless student provides supporting documentation (see Learning Access Program below).

You must attend the following student productions:

- *Production 1*, October 16th – 19th @ 7:30pm and October 19th and 20th at 2:00pm in the Experimental Theatre (K-Wing basement). Tickets are $10.

- *Production 2*, November 13-16 @ 7:30pm and November 16-17 @ 2:00pm in the Experimental Theatre (K-Wing basement). Tickets are $10.

PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Participation: By enrolling in this course, each student makes the tacit commitment to participate. Class participation involves more than mere physical presence. Students are expected to be actively involved in the class. Students are encouraged to ask relevant questions, take notes, contribute observations during class exercises and presentations, and contribute to the over-all learning environment of this course.

Penalty for Non-Attendance:

Up to two absences: No penalty
4 absences your **highest possible** grade will be an "A-"
5 absences your **highest possible** grade will be a "B+"
6 absences your **highest possible** grade will be a "B"
7 absences your **highest possible** grade will be a "B-"
8 absences your **highest possible** grade will be an "E"

Penalty for Arriving Late or Leaving Early:
4 tardies or leaving early=1 absence

1. ATTENDANCE: Acting is a collaborative art. In order for all members of the class to gain as much as possible from the classroom exercises it is necessary to cultivate a comfortable, respectful and stimulating classroom community. Your obligation to this community can only be fulfilled by regular, punctual attendance and by constructive participation. You should expect to attend ALL classes. If absence is unavoidable, instructor and acting partners should be notified as soon as possible. More than two absences will result in a one-step reduction in your participation grade. Another reduction will occur for every absence thereafter. Three tardies equal one absence.

2. ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES: Since most assignments in Intro to Acting are presented in class, and scheduling those presentations is complex, it is essential that we

adhere to our schedule once we establish it. Assignments must be presented ON TIME. Failure to present on schedule will result in a reduction of your grade for that project and your overall participation grade. Exceptions might be made for extreme cases, but such exceptions must be negotiated in advance.

3. DRESS: Always dress for maximum freedom of movement. If a character requires special costuming, come prepared for a quick change. Keep in mind that jewelry and shoes can inhibit movement too.

4. HOUSEKEEPING: The physical condition of our workspace reflects the respect we have for our art. We (that is everyone using this space) will all be responsible for its careful up-keep. If you bring in a prop or costume piece, take it out. If you present a messy scene, leave adequate time for clean-up.

5. PHYSICAL CONTACT: During the teaching process, in order to engender correct physical and vocal placement, it may help the student's understanding if the instructor touches the student in such places as arms, hands, chest, lower back, abdomen, neck, legs, etc. Some in-class exercises can also involve physical contact between students. If you do not wish to be touched, please inform me at any point in the term and your wishes will be respected.

6. CELL PHONES AND OTHER DEVICES: Use of mobile devices during class (when it is not out of a necessity for class) is a disruption, disrespectful to your professor, and to your classmates. **All mobile devices must be turned off and kept out of sight for the duration of the class**, unless otherwise approved. Improper use of mobile devices in class will lower your participation grade. If you feel you have a valid educational need for any electronic device, please see me and I will be happy to accommodate valid requests.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Accessibility Statement
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, students with a documented disability and need accommodations, are encouraged to register with the Learning Access Program (LAP). Registration for support services is strictly voluntary and on a confidential basis. Support services provided by LAP are meant to help students devise strategies for meeting the University's educational demands and to foster independence, responsibility, and self-advocacy. The Learning Access Program can be found on campus in room 123 or online at www.abcuniversity/LAP. Please call 000-111-2222 or send an email to LAP@abcuniversity.edu for more information. Once you have received an accommodation letter from LAP, please contact your instructor to privately discuss your needs as soon as practical to ensure that reasonable accommodations are implemented.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will receive a point/percentage deduction to be determined by the instructor. If you are working with a scene partner and are absent, that will impact your scene partner. Please do not put that person in a tough situation.

Extra-Credit Work: Extra credit assignments will be at the sole discretion of the instructor. I will only consider extra credit assignments due to excused absences or extenuating circumstances (if grades are affected by illness, family emergencies, etc.).

Extra Credit Opportunities:
Spring Auditions   1 point
> *(Auditions for the spring production will take place on Monday, September 9th. Audition preparation, location, and sign-up details will be posted outside of the experimental theatre and discussed in class once those details become available.)*

Production Review

> *(There will be opportunities to write a review for a live performance you attended on campus throughout the semester.)*

Standard Grading Criteria:
  A – Superior. Student works at an excellent level. Work is complete, well presented, and reflective of exceptional standards of superior quality. This grade indicates a student who has mastered the subject; it is not an impossible grade to achieve, but it is rare and difficult to come by.
  B – Good. Student works at a commendable level. Work is generally complete, adequately presented, and reflective of above-average standards. This grade signifies solid accomplishment and generally indicates a student whose work is of consistently high quality.
  C – Average. Student works at a minimally satisfactory level. Work is relatively competent, adequately presented, and/or reflective of minimally acceptable standards. This grade signifies work that is average and suggests an understanding sufficient for continued study in the discipline. It is considered a borderline grade for courses in a student's major.
  D – Unsatisfactory. Student works at a substandard level. Work is incomplete and poorly presented. This grade indicates inferior work, demonstrating only a negligible level of understanding.
  E – Failure. Student works at an unacceptable level, generally indicating a clear lack of effort or interest. It also may be the result of cheating, reflecting student behavior that violates guidelines for academic integrity.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Following is a tentative course outline for this semester/term. The instructor may adjust content, assignments, and due dates to accommodate changing needs during the semester. Specific assignment due dates will be posted to Bb, including email announcements.

Section	Topic	Assignment Due
1	Introductions Creating A Space to Work In	Syllabus Quiz (Bb)
2	Foundations of Acting: Storytelling, Imagination, and Play	Listen to "Why We Play" (NPR)
3	One-On-One Meetings	Meetings (Graded)
4	Invisible Thread: Repetition	Journal 1 Due
5	Invisible Thread: Working Off-Of	
6	The Reality of Doing: Scenes	Journal 2 Due
7	Stakes	Journal 3 Due
8	Tackling the Text: Preparation & Process	
9	Scenes: Application & Integration (In-Class Scene Rehearsals)	Journal 4 Due
10	Presentations	
11	Final Exam Week	

No Class on

Tuesday, October 22—Preceptorial Advising

Thursday, November 28th—Thanksgiving

Thursday, December 12th—Finals Week

Appendix H: Demographics Sheet

Demographics

Student #: _____

Gender: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Age: Please select from the age ranges below

_____ Late Teens _____ Early 20's _____Mid 20's _____ Late 20's

Year at the University: _____

Major: _____

Minor: _____

Beta University IRB Approval: 2019.194

Walden University IRB Approval: 10-08-19-0365395

Appendix I: Ten Topics That Emerged From the Individual Interviews

Ten Topics that Emerged from the Individual Interviews

1. Acting develops your Confidence

2. Acting and Honesty go together with Communication

3. Communication is vital in Acting and in Employment

4. Both Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication is essential in Improvisation and Employment

5. Communication Spontaneity in Improvisation equals Communication Spontaneity in Real-Life

6. Communication accommodation in Scene-Work is important for clearer understanding of each actor's verbal intent or purpose

7. Verbal Communication Skills include Listening

8. Repetition is essential in developing acting skills as well as verbal communication skills

9. Developing your Verbal Communication Skills also develops your confidence in pursuing employment

10. Verbal Communication Skills is vital to succeeding in Life and Employment