2017

French Speaking Students' Challenges in Academic Literacy at International University of Grand-Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

International University of Grand-Bassam (IUGB) first opened its doors in Cote d'Ivoire, in a sociocultural context where a significant number of freshmen students were French speakers. Because the instructional language was English, students were faced with a language barrier that triggered more issues including difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The purpose of this study was to uncover French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB and to suggest some solutions that would benefit students and instructors. The research questions focused on faculty members' perceptions of French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy, and their suggestions for improving student proficiency in English at IUGB. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, as well as Cummins's theory of language acquisition framed the conceptual foundation of this study. A qualitative case study research design was used with data gathered from 8 classroom observations, 8 individual interviews, and 1 focus group discussion. Participants were instructors selected from all 3 schools of the university. Data analysis included open coding and data triangulation. Major findings included students' lack of proficiency in English that negatively affected the beginning of their tertiary education. As a response, faculty members used a variety of instructional strategies to support their students. They also called for administrative authorities to help create an environment more conducive to student proficiency. A project was developed suggesting ways to overcome French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB. Implementation of these suggested changes could result in significant improvements in student learning at IUGB and benefit both students and faculty.

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Acknowledgements

To have come this far is very humbling. I am so thankful to everyone who helped me along this journey. To Dr. Dillard and Dr. Englesberg, please receive my endless thanks. To my wife Melissa and my children, Laurelle and Archange, especially Laurelle who was convinced that all I did was studying for this doctoral degree, I want to say THANK YOU all for hanging in with me. I love you. When you finally read these words, the journey has come to an end.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

With globalization has come a number of phenomenon including the emergence and dominance of English as the world language (Barry, 2011; East, 2009; Harmer, 2001; Phillipson, 2008). Barry (2011) observed that with any four people who speak English, three are nonnative speakers. The implication of this information is that more people are using the English language than ever before, and one of the places this phenomenon is happening is in colleges and universities (Avila, 2007). For instance, the United States Department of Education (2006) revealed that nearly 45% of adults enrolled nation-wide in state-administered programs attend English as a second language class or English literacy classes. In addition, Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, and Paez (2008) wrote that lack of English literacy has been associated with poor performance in school as they investigated 274 English language learners from China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Central America, and Mexico. Furthermore, McBrien (2008) found that students learning English experienced numerous challenges because they did not have the same cultural capital as their native peers. Thus, as college and university students learn to develop literacy skills in English as their instructional language, linguists and scholars interested in the use of language are analyzing the link between academic literacy in English and higher education (Afful, 2007).

As a higher institution, International University of Grand-Bassam (IUGB) enrolls French students (IUGB, 2012) who are not so different from students from Haiti, Central America, or China in so far as they are all learning English as their academic language in

college. According to Klingner, Artiles, and Barletta (2013), English language learners are a heterogeneous population in terms of ethnicity, nationality, and socio-economic background. In sum, the struggles that French speaking students at IUGB face in English literacy are no different than the ones other students from different demographics face. However, French speaking students at IUGB experience a unique context that makes their challenges worth studying.

Definition of the Problem

When IUGB first opened its doors in 2005 in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), it was the result of a partnership between Georgia State University in Georgia, USA and the state of Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa to create a university system based on the American model of higher education (IUGB, 2012). In essence, IUGB was set out to function as an "international branch campus" (Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012, p. 6). The establishment of this university included using English as the instructional language throughout the university. However, the prospective students in Cote d'Ivoire and the region, with the exception of Liberia and Ghana, were all French speaking students (Sakellariou & Patrinos, 2009). As a result of the language barrier, the university administered the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) as an admission requirement. Then, upon admission, students were enrolled in a preundergraduate program (IUGB, 2012) that was designed to teach students the basic literacy skills to be able to undertake university studies. Although English was taught in secondary schools in the region as a second language (Grootaert, 1994), about 40% of students admitted at IUGB showed a lack of literacy skills necessary to start their tertiary education in English (Arnould & Dadzie,

2003; IUGB, 2012). In informal communication with IUGB faculty members, it was revealed that students were often not proficient to meet the demands of academic literacy that higher education placed on them. Therefore, academic literacy in English became a challenge for the French speaking students as they navigated their way throughout the different disciplines at IUGB.

The problem of academic literacy in English was not unique to IUGB. Next to Cote d'Ivoire in Ghana, Afful (2007) identified serious disconnects between the university required academic level and the literacy skills of incoming freshmen. As a result, Afful offered a change in the curriculum of English for academic purposes for Ghanaian universities. In a case study focused on Cape Coast University, Afful argued that high school students enter university with a set of experiences, skills, and attitudes that are not properly suited to university work. He demonstrated for instance how writing at the tertiary level is significantly different from preuniversity writing (Afful, 2007). Consequently, he suggested a systemic evaluation of current programs, and proposed a new curriculum for freshmen students in order to better prepare them for university level work (Afful, 2007).

Lack of academic literacy can even be found in U.S. colleges and universities, as researchers have shown that the explosion of immigration in the United States has forced colleges and universities to create programs in order to teach academic literacy in English (Curry, 2004; Hakuta, 2011; Matthews-Aydinli, 2008; Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011). Curry (2004) observed that immigrant students have to not only learn English, but also have to master the specialized practices of academic reading, writing, and speaking that

characterizes university level education. Duran (2008) explained that part of the root causes of the problem comes with the estimated 4.5 million immigrant students in US secondary schools. More specifically, Bunch and Panayotova (2008) reported that a survey of community college students placement tests in California found that 70% of freshmen were placed in remedial Mathematics and 42% in remedial English. In addition, Balfanz, McPartland, and Shaw (2002) revealed that half of ninth graders in US schools with a high poverty concentration read 3 years or more below grade level. This situation created a snowball effect culminating in reaching about 40% of high school graduates lacking the necessary literacy skills to succeed in higher studies (Achieve, Inc., 2005).

Finally, undergraduate students from mainland China were reported to be facing similar challenges in academic literacy (Nambiar & Ibrahim, 2013). According to these authors, most mainland Chinese students received both their primary and secondary education in Mandarin. Hence, English was seen as a foreign language and students had limited opportunities to practice the language. For instance, Evans and Rigby (2008) detailed that some of those students in the accounting department at Macquarie University were ill-prepared to analyze accounting issues and communicate the results. According to the researchers, students performed poorly partly because of their non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as their lack of experience in academic reading and research (Evans and Rigby, 2008).

Thus, colleges and universities across the globe do experience, at various degrees, the problem of academic literacy. One constant issue is that although students in general experience the problem of academic literacy, English learning students such as the ones

at IUGB, experience a more challenging process of becoming academically literate especially because of their nonnative backgrounds (Valdes, 2004). Indeed, in an all French speaking environment, students at IUGB must not only become proficient in English, but they must master the necessary literacy skills to be able to perform in their content courses.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The problem of academic literacy in English was first seen in the number of first time registered students at IUGB. For instance, the school business plan for 2010-2015 revealed that 41 students out of 106 new entrants in the 2009 school year lacked the academic skills in English language to register as freshmen (IUGB, 2012). Forty-three per cent of the 2009 freshmen students registered for the preundergraduate program. The goal of the program was to equip target students with the skills necessary in the areas of English, mathematics, and technology (IUGB, 2012). In addition, although no statistical data existed to document the issue of academic literacy in English at IUGB, personal correspondences with some faculty members have shown that French speaking students were struggling with speaking, reading, and writing assignments in diverse subjects (F. Ahoussi, personal communication, April 20, 2012; F. Ahoussi, personal communication, November 16, 2013; S. Koffi, personal communication, December 9, 2013; T. Bouabre, personal communication, July 20, 2013). Indeed, instructors informally detailed students' challenges in academic discourses and analytical skills when interacting with texts and critical writing and thinking. For instance, F. Ahoussi (personal communication, April 20,

2012) wrote that a number of students were reluctant to speak English in public or in front of their peers for fear of making mistakes; gave chopped speeches due to a lack of vocabulary; or displayed weak writing skills seen in inadequate sentence structures. Thus, the manifestation of the problem of academic literacy in English for French speaking students at IUGB took different forms.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Although the literature on academic literacy faced by French speaking students at IUGB is limited and almost non-existent, there is literature in the larger context that shows how the issue is prevalent and how colleges and universities are dealing with the issue (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Harklau, 2001; Janzen, 2008; Leki, 2003). In a study of Malaysian undergraduate students, non-native English speakers, Wahi, O'Neill, and Chapman (2011) found that students had difficulties dealing with unfamiliar words and difficulties understanding complex language structure in reading. They also documented extensive English language learners' challenges in writing and speaking, respectively in the forms of applying accurate grammatical rules and limited vocabulary and problems of pronunciation (Wahi et al., 2011).

Scarcella (2003) echoed similar findings as she conducted a study focused on English language learners (ELLs) at 22 Californian colleges and universities. She wrote that students (ELLs) lacked knowledge of spelling, grammatical structures and vocabulary. In addition, these students exhibited inadequate writing skills and poor English proficiency (Scarcella, 2003). Finally, she observed that 47% of all freshmen failed their English placement test across all 22 campuses in 2001 (Scarcella, 2003).

Scarcella noted that those students who failed the placement test were required to take remedial English which focused on helping them acquire the literacy skills necessary to complete university level work.

According to Kuo (2006), colleges in the United States have been taken by surprise with the high demand of English as second language courses. Experts have shown however that students who fitted this background experienced the problem of academic literacy at a more acute level (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Cummins (1984) explained that students who do not speak English as their first language need 5 to 7 years in school in order to be able to perform as well in English as their peers who are native speakers. As a result, learning literacy skills can be daunting for ELLs. Consequently, colleges and universities across the United States have or are putting in place English literacy programs to meet the educational needs of ELLs (Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2006; Kuo, 2006). Examples of such programs were: the American Language Institute at New York University; the English Language Program at the University of California, San Diego; and the English as Second Language Program at Miami-Dade Community College.

The common thread between these literacy programs is content-based instruction that encompasses different content topics, rooted in a variety of instructional techniques, and used as the vehicle for second language learning (Echevarria et al., 2006). This instructional model is known as the content-based ESL (Kasper, 1995) and recommends teaching ELL English through the use of content area textbooks that are used in mainstream university classrooms. Bifuh-Ambe (2011) contended that through this

instructional model, ELLs are expected to not only learn social communicative skills, but also academic language competency.

From this brief review of studies, examples are seen that clearly demonstrate how the problem of academic literacy in English is a true challenge for students, regardless of language of birth or geographical context. What is talked about informally at IUGB is very well documented in the wider literature. Issues such as students' non-native backgrounds or lack of preparedness for tertiary academic tasks are common to any ELL. In an attempt to help resolve those challenges, colleges and universities have put remedial programs in place, including at IUGB. This shows that IUGB is clearly aware of students' difficulties in academic literacy. However, because the literature is missing at this local level, it is the purpose of this project study to offer an analysis of students' challenges in academic literacy and suggest some solutions that would benefit students, instructors, the administration and any other stakeholder.

Definitions

Academic literacy: Using language for thinking and meaning in multiple circumstances (Green, 1999). It encompasses an operational literacy (competency in the language), a cultural literacy (communication in the language of a specific group of people or a subject), and a critical literacy as in understanding how knowledge is made and how it can be transformed (Green, 1999).

ELLs: English language learners. The term designates all non-native English students whose academic language is English (Wahi et al., 2011).

Significance of the Problem

The issue of student academic literacy took a particular meaning in this study because IUGB, the local setting of the research, was dealing with a majority of French speaking students (Arnould & Dadzie, 2003). For these students, being proficient in English was the first step to being successful in tertiary education. Consequently, the language barrier can represent a primary challenge to academic literacy. Flowerdew (1998) identified ELLs' linguistic difficulties in English arising from the lack of adequate listening skills. Once they have overcome that hurdle, French speaking students would need to learn a complex technical language relating to the various disciplines they would be taking during their tertiary education (Leki, 2007). Therefore, uncovering the complexity of academic literacy as it related to French speaking students at IUGB and making all stakeholders aware of the issue was the first merit of this study.

In addition, studying the problem of academic literacy at IUGB offers some benefits. First, the administration at IUGB and local educational executives could use the insights of this study to better address the issue of academic literacy for French speaking students. Second, the findings of this study can be used to inform local educational or policy planners. Third, this study will fill a literature gap about the issues and needs of French speaking students in the West African region, as well as contribute to scholarly literature at large. If such reflection is not undertaken, then the challenges and struggles in academic literacy for French speaking students IUGB may not be known for a long time. It appears then, that documenting those students' challenges in academic literacy as

seen by their instructors is significantly important, as this process participates in the overall student success at IUGB.

Research Questions

After defining the purpose of this study and unveiling the importance of the study, it appeared critical to ask questions that would guide the research. IUGB is a unique setting where instructors can have a particular influence on their students because of the non-native backgrounds of the latter. Thus, to carry out this study, the research was articulated around three main guiding questions:

- What are the perceptions of IUGB faculty about the academic literacy challenges faced by IUGB French speaking students?
- What are the experiences of faculty members at IUGB in instructing, evaluating, and advising French speaking students?
- What suggestions do faculty members have for improving student academic literacy at IUGB?

In this study, I focused on faculty members' perceptions because they were the primary actors to notice students' challenges in academic literacy as they taught and interacted with them. In addition, Faculty had the responsibility of assessing students' assignments and performance. As such, they were directly aware of students' challenges and successes. Therefore, their opinions became valuable in a research study where I sought to investigate students' challenges in academic literacy.

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The study was framed within several theoretical perspectives. Foundationally, this study was guided by the sociocultural learning theories of Vygotsky (1987). Within the context of family literacy, parents and other extended family members support their children's literacy learning in helping them construct meaning and build comprehension skills through interaction with a variety of genres. Paramount to Vygotsky's theory is his conviction that biological and cultural developments transpire concurrently (Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky (1987) believed that these developments are a lifelong process dependent on social interaction that ultimately led to cognitive development. The current study is well informed by Vygotsky's theory in that IUGB offers a context where cultural and social interactions continually take place between faculty and students, resulting in student learning. For example, students seeking extra help may engage in more interactions with their instructors in order to obtain a better or deeper understanding of a concept previously discussed in class. From these discussions and interactions may come more learning for students, yielding cognitive growth.

This study was also built on the theory of constructivism, the foundation of active learning. The constructivist theory posits that students use what they already know to connect to what they are attempting to learn (Trowler & Cooper, 2002). Some constructivists contend that learning takes place when the individual engages in interactive social activities with other members of the community (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, & Scott, 1994). Dewey (1911) theorized that learning takes place by using

prior experiences and knowledge in order to construct new knowledge. Dewey (1938) continued the constructivist theory by concluding that students build new knowledge based on their individual and collective experiences. Piaget (1964) furthered the constructivist theory by proposing that when students gain new information or experiences, they attempt either to incorporate it into their existing knowledge or they adjust their knowledge in order to accommodate the new understanding, a continuous construction and reconstruction of knowledge (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

As students at IUGB go from one academic content to another, they are confronted with language learning as they build up a new content literacy. From a linguist standpoint, Bakhtin (1986) contended that there is no such reality as language outside social contexts. Rather, language becomes true language when it embraces a communicative and dialogic role within human activity (Lave, 1996). According to Bakhtin and sociolinguists, a writer or speaker never formulates a statement without a reader or listener in mind in past, present, and future voices as contexts for language use (as cited in Purcell-Gates, et al., 2012). With this perspective, context is central in language learning as proficiency is affected by such factors as culture, schools, and communities (Goldenberg, Rueda, & August, 2006).

Finally, Cummins's theory of language acquisition influenced this research study. Cummins (2000) distinguished two aspects of the language acquisition process. He called the first aspect basic interpersonal communication skills (Cummins, 2000). This is a 1 to 2-year process where second language learners are able to develop conversational proficiency. The second aspect, cognitive academic language proficiency, takes 5 to 7

years and requires second language learners to analyze and deconstruct academic texts. As a result, basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency must be sufficiently developed for ELLs to master academic tasks. Thus, a student may be fluent in regular conversations, yet he or she may face challenges with academic tasks (Lucas et al., 2008). Considering this issue, it is understandable that instructors at IUGB write that students are experiencing difficulty in content areas, despite spending an accelerated year in pre-undergraduate (F. Ahoussi, personal communication, November 16, 2013; S. Koffi, personal communication, December 9, 2013).

In the end, this study drew on the learning theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin as they both bring a unique expertise to explaining the type of learning French students were engaged in at IUGB. However, this study was also rooted in the two-tiered language acquisition process offered by Cummins (2000). The practical nature of the theory offers some insights on the challenges faced by students at IUGB.

Brief Overview of Higher Education in Cote d'Ivoire

In order to better understand the findings that will come out of this study, a description of the higher educational context appears appropriate. The rationale is based on the constructivists' learning theory whereby it hard to dis-associate the environment from the subject being studied. Furthermore, critics, theorists and researchers alike agree on the social/context factor of language learning as previously mentioned.

Problem of Access to Higher Education

The higher learning context in Cote d'Ivoire is characterized by a lack of universities, public or private, creating de facto a problem of access to higher education in Cote d'Ivoire (World Bank, 2007). In an audit of the status of higher education in Cote d'Ivoire, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (2011) documented that from the date of independence of Cote d'Ivoire in 1960 until the middle 2000s, only one public university, Universite Nationale de Cote d'Ivoire (UNCI) was built to educate the country's youth. However, the student population has continuously increased from a few thousands in the 1960s to more than 5 million students (Sakellariou & Patrinos, 2009). In 2012, the Guardian Weekly estimated at 85,000 the number of students in the whole country, with 62,000 at the main campus in Abidjan. Sakellariou and Patrinos (2009) found that, of 2.4 million students enrolled in schools in Cote d'Ivoire in 1998, only 27% were enrolled in tertiary education. They cited inadequate or lack of enrollment facilities as a major hurdle for prospective college students (Sakellariou and Patrinos, 2009).

The World Bank (2010) observed that the enrollment of students in tertiary education has exploded to surpass 100,000 students in 2010 when adequate facilities were still lacking. The World Bank further reported that the number of students seeking a post-secondary education has been growing from 28,000 to 30,000 students every year since the 1990s. In an extensive research study about the feasibility of a private university in the region, Arnould and Dadzie (2003) found that about 8,000 to 10,000 students seek enrollment at UNCI alone. Although two satellite campuses were created in

2000 in an effort to meet the increasing demand for higher education, scores of students have been turned away over the years (Arnould & Dadzie, 2003). However, the exact number is unknown from scholarly sources. Local newspapers, Fraternite Matin (2012) and L'Expression (2011) estimated that number to be between 1,000 and 2,000 students yearly.

Issues of Quality in Higher Education

The lack of access to higher education has triggered a number of other issues such as over crowdedness of the main university for a long time (Schultheis, 2005). In addition, UNCI, like other regional public universities was faced with the issue of continuing to provide quality teaching and quality learning with poorly maintained classrooms and lack of materials or technology (Jones, 2007; Negash, 2011). Schultheis (2005) observed that because African universities like UNCI failed to plan for the growth of their student population, they became confronted with such issues as recruiting and retaining quality instructors as well as building and implementing strong curricula.

In an attempt to remedy the lack of higher educational institutions, three more public universities were recently created, totaling five public universities (United Nations, 2012). Moreover, Cloete, Bailey, and Pillay (2011) suggested that sub-Saharan countries, including Cote d'Ivoire should explore partnering with private higher educational institutions and cost sharing for low income students. The intent is for private universities to help in providing access to higher education where the state is unable to meet demand. In this respect, there is a growing number of private higher educational institutions in Cote d'Ivoire, educating more than 30% of students enrolled in higher

education (United Nations, 2012). Furthermore, Jones (2007) reported that a number of sub-Saharan countries have now set up national quality assurance agencies, in charge of enforcing quality education in both public and private universities. One area of scrutiny and reflection is English as the instructional language in African colleges and universities (Clegg & Afitska, 2011; Hardman, Abd-Kadir & Smith, 2008; Uys et al.., 2007). IUGB, the site of this study falls in that category.

Second Language Issues

Sub-Sahara Africa is a huge land that offers a multitude of languages. Estimates tally the number of indigenous languages at around 1,000 (World Bank, 2010). In Nigeria for example, 400 native languages have been recorded (Hardman, et al., 2008). In Cote d'Ivoire, there are no less than 60 spoken native languages (Negash, 2011). In South Africa, 11 languages have been proclaimed official languages throughout the country (Diederichs, 2009). To these languages, African colleges and universities have selected English as their instructional language. If this choice is easy to understand for historical reasons in former British colonies, it is less obvious in French speaking Africa. In former French colonies such as Cote d'Ivoire, Mali or Senegal, although the language of education is French from elementary to tertiary levels, English is the first compulsory foreign language taught in secondary schools (Negash, 2011). Thus, English as a second language has become dominant in tertiary education in sub-Sahara Africa.

However, the implementation of English-medium instruction by non-native instructors to non-native speaking students has shown some significant difficulties (Klaassen & De Graaff, 2001; Yushau, 2009). In sub-Sahara Africa, Clegg and Afitska

(2011) found that African students were often not fluent enough in the use of the second language. They noted that interactions in the second language between teachers and students were short, and not frequent or linguistically elaborate. For instance, during small group works, they noticed that students spoke languages different from the instructional language. Because of their lack of proficiency, students are reluctant to speak up in plenary classroom.

Similarly, Hardman, et al. (2008) reported very little interactions in English between teachers and students. The findings revealed that student speaking (English) activities were mainly choral or repetitive at 62% of the time. Students' cued answers took place 34% of the time and served more as rituals and routines rather than students' inquiry (Hardman et al., 2008). Only 1% of the time did students initiated or asked individual questions (Hardman et al., 2008). Finally, bi-lingual code switching was used by teachers to check for understanding in at least three quarters of the lessons (Hardman et al., 2008).

Although it can be argued the findings of Hardman, et al. (2008) are not generalizable to higher education, they do show the challenges and limitations of elementary and secondary learning in a second language. Furthermore, Hardman et al., (2008) shed light on the type of foundation young students in many African classrooms are getting in English-medium instruction. One concern is that the problems of poor language skills can transfer over to secondary schools and could become significant as student enter higher education (Hardman et al., 2008).

Bharuthram (2012) highlighted the literacy situation in South Africa with a particular focus on reading in both secondary schools and higher education. She reported that academics in South African universities are aware that many 12th graders entering universities can barely read and write (Bharuthram, 2012). Additionally, they did not have the English competence that would allow them to construct coherent and cohesive sentences (Bharuthram, 2012). Bharuthram also revealed a high university drop-out rate due to students' unpreparedness, following a change in passing requirements. For instance, out of 120,000 students enrolled in higher education in 2000, 30% dropped out in their first year, and another 20% dropped out during their second and 3rd years (Bharuthram, 2012). Bharuthram pointed out that while university students possessed communicative language, they lacked reading skills. Of the 13,000 students who took the academic literacy test of a National Benchmark Test in 2009, 47% were proficient in English (Bharuthram, 2012). Forty six per cent were classified as intermediate and only 7% were found to have basic academic literacy (Bharuthram, 2012). Finally, Bharuthram demonstrated how many South African students are in a perpetual cycle of low level performance in English and reading. She reported that in 1995, 766 high school seniors who had applied successfully to be teachers were administered a standardized English literacy skills assessment (Bharuthram, 2012). The results showed that 95% of them scored at below eighth grade level; 3% at eighth grade level; 1% at ninth grade level, and 1% at tenth grade level (Bharuthram, 2012).

The lesson that one can draw from the preceding studies is that IUGB is located in sub-Sahara West Africa which is home to hundreds of native languages (World Bank,

2010). Those languages constitute both the background and heritage of students as they start their tertiary education. Yet colleges and universities in the region such as IUGB have made the choice to use English medium instruction to educate their students (Yushau, 2009). Additionally, many of these students start their college careers after completing both their elementary and secondary education speaking French as the instructional language (Negash, 2011). As a result, students are faced with issues of fluency and comprehension in English. They feel insecure and awkward speaking English so they tend to resort to their language of birth or the adopted language (Clegg & Afitska, 2011). Even when students have been exposed to English early on, Hardman et al., (2008) documented that the curriculum is so weak that students' learning is limited to choral and repetitive activities with very few interactions. In this context teachers often used bi-lingual code switching to check for student comprehension (Hardman et al., 2008). Finally, because of students' poor language skills, they access college education with significant challenges in reading, writing, speaking and listening (Bharuthram, 2012).

Nature of the Learner in the Literature

In an attempt to locate the literature that covered the targeted time frame, I carried out a search of articles written between 1980 and 2013. Electronic databases that were used included ERIC, EBSCO, SAGE, ProQuest, and Dissertation Abstracts. Additionally, the Web-based Google Scholar was used. I used different combinations of key words and phrases. Descriptors included *bilingual education, second language education, English*

language learners, English as a second language, English programs and tertiary education, English-medium instruction, English-medium instruction and higher studies.

The literature focusing on French speaking students learning at English-medium universities in the West African region (location of IUGB) is almost non-existent. This may be partly due to the recent history of universities such as IUGB. However, because these students were learning English as the academic language, they qualified as ELLs (Wahi, et al., 2011). Over the years, different terms have been used in the body of literature to label these students: second language learners, English as a second language (ESL), English for speakers of other languages, and English language development. To avoid all ambiguity, I used the term ELLs. Wahi et al., (2011) defined ELLs as students whose target language is English but who operate in environments where their mother tongue language is used extensively in their regular communications. This definition served as a common denominator between all ELLs whether they were at IUGB in Cote d'Ivoire, Malaysia, or in US colleges and universities. Lucas et al., (2008) echoed this definition as they contended that to be successful in school, ELLs must be able to read academic texts and, analyze and produce written documents all in English, regardless of their backgrounds. Consequently, issues of academic literacy faced by ELLs elsewhere can shed light on ELLs' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB, even though cultural differences cannot be ignored.

Current Issues of Academic Literacy

If it is undeniable that all students experience challenges in academic literacy, it is twice the challenge for ELLs because they must complete two jobs in one, as they must

simultaneously seek language proficiency and academic content knowledge (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Thus, a French speaking student or any other English learning student is not only worried about being proficient in English, but he/she must work harder at mastering the language in a technology class for instance. Because of ELLs' unique cultural backgrounds, coupled with a new culture dictated by the language learning process, ELLs often go to great lengths to acquire the academic literacy skills necessary to perform college level tasks (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011; Gutierrez, 2009). Therefore, challenges of academic literacy for ELLs can be daunting and do take many forms.

Listening problems. One of the academic literacy issues that ELLs experience is a linguistic difficulty in listening tasks (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011). Bifuh-Ambe (2011) attributed ELLs' linguistic challenges to their lack of adequate listening skills in English. She observed that because of their non-native backgrounds, ELLs are often challenged during lectures as they must make meaning processing the information without the benefit of a dialogue (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011). Indeed, whereas phrases and ideas can be repeated in a dialogue, a lecture can prove to be full of anxiety for ELLs as they must listen with concentration for long minutes (Flowerdew & Miller, 1997). Carhill, et al. (2008) summarized this issue of exposure to English by saying "less contact, less learning" (p. 1159). Thus, the lack of adequate listening, combined with the often fast flow of information in certain contexts create enormous challenges ELLs must overcome.

Mokhtar (2010) went deeper in his analysis of ELLs' problems in listening, contending that the root cause is in their lack of vocabulary knowledge. Drawing from a quantitative research study that examined the receptive and productive vocabulary size of

Malaysian university students, Mokhtar (2010) revealed that non-native students needed 95% of the running words to gain a reasonable comprehension in the second language. To reach that level of listening comprehension, students needed a vocabulary size of around 2,000 words. Data collected from 360 students showed that Malaysian students had limited receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. For instance, 97 of 126 students failed the 2,000 word level test during Semester 1 of their tertiary education. Mokhtar concluded by stressing that Malaysian students were at a disadvantage as they learned in English since their lack of vocabulary knowledge significantly affected their listening comprehension skills.

What one can take away from this brief review is that ELLs, just like the ones at IUGB, lack adequate listening skills in English because of their native and previous school backgrounds (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011). Moreover, they lack exposure to English as students practice the language (English) on campus only because it is the language of instruction (Carhill et al., 2008). Otherwise, English is absent in their ordinary environments (Carhill et al., 2008). Ells also lack the necessary vocabulary baggage to sustain long listening with new concepts being developed or presented (Mokhtar, 2010). As a result, ELLs experience difficulty to keep up with lectures where they are required to pay close attention to words and speeches (Flowerdew & Miller, 1997).

Reading problems. ELLs experience more linguistic challenges in the forms of difficulty to understand the language in textbooks of subject areas (Janzen, 2008). Janzen (2008) explained that these difficulties proceed from high lexical density and unknown vocabulary in texts and a context often foreign to ELLs' life experiences. There is

evidence that the content, the types and the context of reading passages can have a significant impact on ELLs' reading performance (Lee, 2002). Pulido (2004) detailed how students' performances increased when they were familiar with the content of a text they had to study. For instance, Peretz and Shoham (1990) observed that a group of English as a foreign language students found texts related to their field more comprehensible than texts related to other fields. Thus, it is hard to disassociate the learning process from context. In an extensive research about ELLs' learning issues, Klingner et al., (2006) concluded that because ELLs come to the classrooms with a different and unfamiliar cultural knowledge than the mainstream culture, they are more likely to experience challenges in reading.

One underlying problem to ELLs' skills in reading is their lack of vocabulary because of its impact on reading comprehension (Kameli & Baki, 2013). Drawing from data collected from 220 students attending a private institution in Iran, Kameli and Baki, (2013) examined the impact of vocabulary knowledge level on reading comprehension performance among Iranian students learning English as a second language. Students were administered a vocabulary level test of 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 words. Then, students took an academic reading test measuring their reading comprehension performance. The findings in this quantitative research study revealed that the correlation between the four different word levels was significant and positive. The results showed that if learners scored high at 5,000 or 10,000 word levels, they were proficient at a lower vocabulary level. Equally important was the consistency of students' high scores in vocabulary level test with their performance in reading comprehension. Here again there

was a highly significant relationship between second language learners' vocabulary breadth and their reading comprehension performance. Kameli and Baki, (2013) concluded by reaffirming the enormous difficulty that ELLs face when they lack vocabulary knowledge.

In sum, the ELLs' lack of vocabulary has a significant negative impact on their reading comprehension level (Janzen, 2008; Kameli & Baki, 2013). ELLs' challenges in reading increase even more as they are confronted to long and thick texts that often depict a culture foreign to theirs (Klingner et al., 2006). The exercise of trying to understand the content of a text and its culture that is entirely new to them can trigger enormous reading difficulties (Kameli & Baki, 2013; Peretz & Shoham, 1990; Pulido, 2004).

Writing problems. College level work also involves a considerable volume of writing for which ELLs must demonstrate proficiency (Cheng, Klinger & Zheng, 2007). However, university scholars have revealed that these students show critical writing deficiencies in their papers. For example, the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (2002), a committee of professors and instructors selected from California's colleges and universities documented that 50% of their first year students (ELLs) failed to produce papers relatively free of language errors. The committee further indicated that

- Only 1/3 of those students were sufficiently prepared for the most frequently assigned writing tasks: analyze and synthesize information.
- 48% could spell accurately.
- 41% could use correct grammar, punctuation and appropriate vocabulary Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (2002).

The same issues still prevail as documented by Hiew (2012). She investigated 46 Malaysian ELLs and found that these students (ELLs) lacked exposure to academic writing; had difficulty synthesizing information and paraphrasing or citing sources (Hiew, 2012).

Reasons for these issues varied from having to translate thoughts from first language to English, to spending too much time looking up vocabulary words in the dictionary (Hiew, 2012). Wahi et al., (2011) explained that the lack of vocabulary along with the lack of academic writing practice in secondary school, make it hard for ELLs to master the writing skills in tertiary education. Indeed, it is hard to deny the importance of practice as students work to improve their writing skills. Finally, ELLs show limitations in linguistic abilities. Curry (2004) pointed out that ELLs access college with very little experience in certain linguistic and academic activities such as notes taking, essay writing and skillful manipulation of complex elements of language and rhetoric.

The essence from the aforementioned studies shows that ELLs are critically deficient in writing in the areas of synthesis and analysis of information (Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002). In spelling and grammar, paraphrasing and citing sources, students have been found to show deficiencies as well (Hiew, 2012). Finally, ELLs at the beginning of their college careers show almost no experience in note taking, essay writing or mastery of complex linguistic terms (Curry, 2004). Again, ELLs' limited vocabulary, coupled with their lack of academic writing practice at the secondary level make it hard to master the writing skills at college level (Wahi et al., 2011). ELLs' challenges are also seen in more areas including speaking.

Speaking problems. If listening, reading and writing present challenges to English language learners, it is easy to imagine that they will face even greater challenges in speaking English. In his five hypotheses on language acquisition, Krashen (1982) underlined the importance of language input and language output. That is, before the individual can produce language, he/she must have stored the knowledge of that language. According to Carrigan (2009), the learner must be able to comprehend the language before he/she can have the ability to produce the language. Speaking for ELLs becomes even more difficult because of different orthographic relationships between the written form and the pronunciation of so many words (Cuetos & Suarez-Coalla, 2009). Cuetos and Suarez-Coalla (2009) also explained that English is a complex system where a single letter is pronounced differently depending on the word it spells with. These difficulties explain why ELLs tend to be shy or hesitate to express themselves publicly for fear of being embarrassed in front of peers (Krashen, 1982). This finding suggests that ELLs experience anxiety in speaking English which, according to Pappamihiel (2002), not only prevents the learner from reaching optimal linguistic input, but also causes them to withdraw from social interactions, known to be critical context for learning a language. Finally, besides peers ostracism and harassment, ELLs feel anxious because of the unfamiliarity with the new culture, the people in the school, the institution and the policies (Lucas et al., 2008). Indeed, culture is of an utmost importance in students' backgrounds as observed by den Brok et al., (2006) in South-East Asian students' learning behaviors. They found that students' reticence to speak up in class was partly due to their gentle, shy and collectivist nature (den Brok et al., 2006). For instance, they

revealed that because the Brunei society is highly stratified, public speaking was mainly limited to group repetition or class recitals (den Brok et al., 2006). As a result, individual speaking practice remains limited.

Clearly, speaking English in front of others is a major hurdle for ELLs. From shyness that they observe in the face of a new culture and context (Lucas et al., 2008), to the anxiety that they feel as they face new words with complex orthography (Cuetos et al., 2009), ELLs tend to withdraw as a defense mechanism to weather their new environment (Pappamihiel, 2002). However, doing so can only prolong their stage of proficiency in English (Krashen, 1982).

In sum the current issues in academic literacy show that French speaking students at IUGB as well as any ELL, are faced with language skills problems in all four areas of language learning. In listening, the lack of vocabulary combined with the lack of continued exposure to English impede students' listening comprehension skills as they struggle to keep up with activities such as lectures (Bifuh-Ambe, 2011; Carhill et al., 2008; Mokhtar, 2010). In reading, the high density of unknown vocabulary coupled with students' foreign background to both content and culture of the new language make reading difficult for ELLs (Janzen, 2008; Kameli & Baki, 2013; Klingner et al., 2006). In writing, significant deficiencies have been noticed in ELLs' writing performances (Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002). This is the result of a lack of practice or training to academic writing (Wahi et al., 2011). Another reason is ELLs' tendency to use literal translation from their own language to the language of instruction (Hiew, 2012). In speaking ELLs feel intimidated by the new language and the new

culture that they do not master (den Brok et al., 2006). Because of some orthographic complexities in the language (English) ELLs experience anxiety from fear of embarrassment from making mistakes (Cuetos et al., 2009). As a result, students withdraw from class interaction and participation, which is central to learning (Krashen, 1982).

Teachers' Perceptions of ELLs' Learning Issues

Since I sought to unveil the perceptions of IUGB faculty about the challenges in academic literacy faced by French speaking students at IUGB, it seemed appropriate to examine the wider literature in order to discover what other faculty or instructors/teachers were saying about students whose instructional language (English) was different from their native language. Following is a summary of research studies informing the current research problem.

In a quantitative research study focused on the challenges and needs of teachers in central Virginia, United States, Cho and Christenbury (2010) found that a majority of teachers agreed that students had significant language learning problems. These researchers documented that 68% of the surveyed teachers indicated that ELLs lacked background knowledge of content subjects; 56% acknowledged a language barrier between them and their students because of their students' lack of proficiency in English. (Cho & Christenbury, 2010). They also reported that 56% of the teachers lacked the resources and time to devote to ELLs (Cho & Christenbury, 2010). This last finding is a reason for concern because ELLs will need time and resources precisely due to the learning gap that they need to fill (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). The potential risk is

that ELLs might find themselves in a revolving circle, unable to attain full proficiency in English.

Similar to the findings of Cho and Christenbury (2010), Doiz, Lazagabaster, and Sierra (2011) found that university instructors complained about students' lack of proficiency in English and mixed language levels in the same classes. Additionally, these researchers reported that some very good students skipped taking the English-medium classes, because of their lack of proficiency in English and for fear of failing (Doiz et al., 2011). Even the ones who took English classes almost never spoke, or spoke rarely for fear of being wrong (Doiz et al., 2011). Doiz et al. carried out a qualitative research design examining university instructors' opinions in English-medium instruction at the University of the Basque Country in Spain. The university is majority Spanish and minority Basque with a newly introduced English content program. Five instructors were interviewed for this study. Doiz, et al. further revealed that students enrolled in the English programs were highly motivated and often more motivated than students in regular classes. The researchers explained that students were aware of their deficiencies and made them up by making extra effort (Doiz et al., 2011). However, they did not explain why English program students were so motivated. Perhaps they were guided by their desires of being more marketable by earning a degree in English since it is recognized as the international communication and business language (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012).

In Turkey, a non-English speaking country as in Cote d'Ivoire, Kirkgoz (2009) investigated the perceptions of students and lecturers as they relate to students' academic

needs at Cukurova University, an English-medium university. Using both a quantitative and qualitative research designs, Kirkgoz researched the opinions of 220 first year students and 15 teachers in order to find out the effectiveness of the instructional programs in English. The findings revealed a consensus among the lecturers that vocabulary was a common source of difficulties for students, affecting their speaking fluency, obstructing reading comprehension, and causing slow reading (Kirkgoz, 2009). For example, some engineering students were reported to experience problems of accuracy in their works because of difficulties in understanding all the terms and mathematical expressions (Kirkgoz, 2009). Lecturers further noted that students had difficulty understanding extended lectures and complained about students' lack of class participation (Kirkgoz, 2009). The latter problem was acknowledged by 78% of the students in the study (Kirkgoz, 2009). Kirkgoz explained that these students' challenges were due to their inability and lack of confidence to speak the second language (English). Finally, Kirkgoz reported that students faced problems in writing in the forms of academic conventions and writing requirements.

In a qualitative case study research design, Huang (2012) echoed more challenges of proficiency in English for students in Taiwan. The participants in this study included three administrators, four teachers, and 24 students who were all interviewed in order to gain an insight of their perceptions relating to the English-medium curriculum. The findings showed that students lacked the required proficiency level to sustain a full immersion program in English and that they experienced difficulty understanding content subjects (Huang, 2012). As a result, instructors resorted to code-switching, using Chinese

as a facilitating language and scaffolding strategy (Huang, 2012). However, international instructors rejected that strategy calling it interference in the mono-language policy (Huang, 2012). Instructors noticed students' frustration with subjects such as Chinese philosophy or Mathematics that were being taught in English when those subjects were already seen difficult in Chinese by students (Huang, 2012). Huang also documented that students were reluctant to participate in class presentations and speaking activities, due to their limited proficiency and lack of confidence in a foreign language.

Despite the observed student deficiencies in English (Doiz et al., 2011; Huang, 2012; Kirkgoz, 2009), many universities continue to implement an English-medium instruction. For instance, Yushau (2009) highlighted the language issue facing Arab university students who are acquiring English as a second language. Yushau examined students' unique difficulties in learning Mathematics in English. He pointed out that Arab students taking Mathematics were weak in English because most of the students were learning English for the first time in their lives after 12 years of education in Arabic. Moreover, because most of the instructors were non-Arab, it resulted a communication gap between students and instructors due to the Arab students' lack of proficiency in English. As a consequence, Arab instructors code-switched sometimes in order to clarify some concepts to their students (Yushau, 2009). Furthermore, Arab students experienced significant challenges in writing. Yushau revealed that one recurrent problem is seen in the Arabic script where Arabic is written from right to left, whereas English is written from left to right. The problem happens when some students, especially in the preparatory years, wanting to write 45 for instance end up with 54 (Yushau, 2009).

Yushau also reported that many students did most of their calculation in Arabic and then translated back in English. In reading, Arab students had difficulty deciphering Mathematic texts and symbols, sometimes mixing Arab and English during reading (Yushau, 2009). Yushau concluded that English proficiency was the underlying critical hurdle for Arab students to overcome if they were going to be successful in their higher studies with English-medium instruction. Although the findings of this article were not seen through the eyes of any particular instructors, it is undeniable that they do shed light on students' challenges relating to academic literacy in English.

The teaching that can be drawn from this review is that teachers and instructors tend to agree that ELLs display significant language problems as they access tertiary education (Cho & Christenbury, 2010). These problems take form in the areas of background knowledge of content subjects, vocabulary, proficiency/fluency, reading and writing (Cho & Christenbury, 2010; Doiz et al., 2011; Kirkgoz, 2009). In some cases, university professors complained of mixed levels (Doiz et al., 2011). For instance, beginning English and intermediate English may be found in the same class. This placement issue directly affects how students participate or interact since this environment is far from homogenous (Kirkgoz, 2009). In other cases, instructors experienced such lack of proficiency or fluency from their students that they resorted to code-switching (Huang, 2012; Yushau, 2009). One issue with this practice is the course of action for the instructors who do not speak their students' language. Finally, one main complaint university instructors have is rooted students' thinking and writing processes in their first language (Yushau, 2009). Because ELLs students think, and write in their first

language, before translating in English, they may prolong their language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

Implications

Since this study was centered on the challenges that IUGB students face in academic literacy, it was understandable to anticipate that the implications of the research might lead to designing a curriculum proposal including instructional strategies to help students. Although the outcomes of the research were not yet known, elaborating such a curriculum based on the findings of the data collection and analysis has the potential to help address the issue of academic literacy at IUGB. At the very minimum, a proposal might be put together to strengthen the English program at the preundergraduate level. Furthermore, a set of suggestions relating to professional developments for instructors could not be ruled out. Indeed, if new strategies were to be implemented, it would be wise that instructors took the time to become familiar with the instructional processes. Wassell, Hawrylak, and LaVan (2010) insisted that teachers should take extra time to train especially when dealing with second language learners. Finally, the findings of this research could lead to further research or discussions in the wider community of scholars.

Summary

In summary, in the process of acquiring academic literacy in English, ELLs must overcome considerable challenges in listening, reading, writing and speaking, all of which are critical domains of language acquisition (Powers, 2010). Although all ELLs have different backgrounds and hardly form a homogeneous group (Wassell et al., 2010), this discussion showed that they all face the same issues. The issue of academic literacy

in English is particularly significant for French students at IUGB as they complete all their secondary studies in French (USIP, 2010).

As I sought to examine the perception of IUGB faculty about the academic literacy challenges faced by French speaking students at IUGB, I discussed the methodology to uncover robust findings. Next, the selection of the participants in the study was reviewed. Then, the data collection sources and the methods of collection were examined, followed by the data analysis. Finally, reflections and discussions were conducted as a result of the findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This section includes the rationale for the research method and research design. It also provides a description of the population and the selection criteria for the participants. Next, data collection sources and methods are discussed. A review of data analysis concludes the section.

First, I used a qualitative method because of the empirical component. That is, the examination of the problem is seen through the eyes of the participants (Bryman, 2012). This is congruent with the research questions as they are centered on the perceptions of faculty in order to determine the challenges in academic literacy faced by French speaking students at IUGB in Cote d'Ivoire. Moreover, the research questions in this study were not framing or testing some hypothesis. Rather, they were driving the investigation in its context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, I could not have used a quantitative approach where the research questions would start with a hypothesis to be tested. Bryman (2012) observed that qualitative research is an exploratory, interpretative and constructivist approach that emphasizes words rather than quantification of data, is flexible, and develops concepts and theories as outcomes. Additionally, qualitative research was the best approach for this study because it uses inductive methods of data collection, where the researcher systematically observes the problem being studied, and looks for patterns during the analysis process in order to develop general statements about the problem (Merriam, 2009). It was my intent to engage in sustained contact with people in order to observe the problem, analyze the data, and frame the new knowing.

Finally, as I sought to understand a non-consistent phenomenon, and obtain specific contextual information (Mack et al., 2005), a qualitative research method was appropriate.

Second, a case study research design appeared to be appropriate for this study although other types of qualitative research were considered. Ethnography could not be implemented because it was not the purpose of this study to research a particular cultural group or community. Because phenomenology focuses on the individual's interpretation of his/her experience, and requires that the researcher spends a considerable amount of time knowing the participants in their daily environment (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010), this research design was ruled out. I could not choose grounded theory because I was not seeking to elaborate a broad theory about my research topic. Rather I wanted to focus on a specific case and draw an in-depth analysis of it. Due to its environment, goals, ambitions, and challenges, IUGB offered a unique case worthy of study. A case with clear limits should use a case study research design (Stake, 1995). Here, IUGB represented such a case. Since the investigator (myself) wanted to understand one case, and the case had been pre-selected, then this study was an intrinsic case study research (Stake, 1995). In addition, Merriam (2009) noted that a case study is best used when the investigator intends to draw an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). The bounded system was faculty interacting with students all around a curriculum at IUGB, a single institution operating in Cote d'Ivoire. Finally, a case study research design was well indicated here because it is a research design that investigates a contemporary problem within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of data

collection are used (Yin, 2009). For instance, in order to collect the participants' perspectives of the problem, observations, focus group discussions, and interviews were used for this study. However, the population and strategy for selecting the sample must first be determined.

Population and Participant Selection

The setting for this study was IUGB, and the participants were made up of faculty members from the different schools at IUGB. The participants in this study were selected using purposeful sampling. As a pool of faculty members was considered for the study, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested selecting a large sample and narrowing it down to the desired size to add credibility to the process. Thus, the selection of the participants was based on their expert knowledge and experience in instructing students at IUGB. Criteria such as degrees, departmental responsibilities, years of teaching at the college level, and nationalities or origins were all considered. Combining such multiples criteria should led to a "maximal variation sampling" (Creswell, 2012). A purposeful sampling is required when the sampling directly relates to the purpose of the study and will lead to yielding rich information (Patton, 1990). Consequently, the sample was made up of faculty members only teaching at IUGB. In addition, in recruiting the participants, the snowball strategy was used whereby some participants were selected on the basis of referral by other participants.

As for the sample size, researchers do not suggest a pre-determined number of participants in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Patton, 1990). However, a sample of 12 faculty members was targeted, as three participants were

selected per college or school. The reason is that this systematic selection was conducive to creating a pool of participants with multiple voices and perspectives to the problem. Furthermore, that number represented a basic and minimum reasonable amount that could be expected to cover the problem being studied (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013).

Sociocultural and Professional Criteria

In this study, I intended to uncover the perception of faculty about the challenges in academic literacy faced by French speaking students at IUGB. Therefore, the selection of faculty as participants in the study is congruent with the research question. Their expertise at IUGB is undeniable as they accomplish various roles and responsibilities including teaching, assessing, and mentoring students. Selected faculty members had to have at least 2 or more years of experience. In this context, the years of experience are justified by the notion that the targeted faculty would have known and experienced the challenges in academic literacy faced by the students at IUGB. In selecting the participants, considerations were given to gender, age, origins (expatriates or Africans) and role or responsibility in at the college/university level. Individual roles and cross-cultural baggage of the participants deliver a valuable knowledge a researcher/observer should pay attention to (Glesne, 2011). The criteria of gender, age and origin are justified in that they offer variables that might affect the participants' opinions about the issue students' academic literacy. For instance, a 60 years-old instructor might not have the same views as a younger instructor in his/her 30s. This stance is certainly true for me after spending 20 years teaching at the high and middle schools. Additionally, it was

worth researching how expatriate instructors on one hand, and local instructors (Africans and Ivorians) on the other hand, who in some cases had to learn English themselves perceived the issue. Similarly, the criterion of gender was considered to see if it would affect the faculty's perception of the challenges in academic literacy faced by French speaking students at IUGB. These criteria were uniformly distributed throughout the selection process as much as the sample size allowed it. The goal was to collect diverse perspectives from different instructors who had firsthand knowledge of the problem.

Field Access and Relationships

Gaining access to the faculty was done through the office of the vice president of the university, even though it was the office of instruction and curriculum at IUGB which eventually handled my research needs such as contacting the target population. As for the authorization protocol, it was first addressed to the office of the vice president where I submitted an email explaining the nature and purpose of my study. My request was forwarded to the office of the chief academic affairs where all practical matters were facilitated. I also submitted a letter of cooperation (Appendix E) to comply with Walden University research policies. My main role was one of researcher-learner as I investigated faculty's perspectives on academic challenges faced by French students at IUGB. In a qualitative research context such as this, Glesne (2011) advised that the investigator should create rapport, develop trust and interact with integrity and ethics. In keeping with this line of conduct, I ensured to meet formally each of the selected participants in order to introduce myself, explain the purpose and scope of my research, explain their role and obtain a copy of their work schedules. I remained friendly and showed respect to avoid

any sensitive differences throughout my interactions with the participants in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For instance, I stayed away from any local politics for fear of triggering uncooperative behaviors. Informal conversations over a tea or coffee break or lunch were offered whenever appropriate in an effort to break potential barriers between the participants and myself.

Prior to beginning the data collection, I read and explained to the participants their rights to confidentiality and protection from harm. An informed consent form was signed between them and me to reassure participants that their privacy would be kept, and to uphold the integrity of my research (Kaiser, 2009). More protection measures such as concealing participants' identities and keeping recording tapes in my sole possession were taken. Morgan (1997) suggested limiting access to audiotapes to only research staff to avoid invading participants' privacy. All these different protection measures were made clear to the participants in order to ease any worries that they may have had otherwise. The goal was to create favorable and morally comfortable conditions for cooperative and forthcoming participants.

Data Collection Sources and Methods

The data that helped explain the problem were collected from different sources including observations, examination of school records, focus group discussions, and individual interviews. The goal was to be able to triangulate the collected information in order to uncover solid findings (Flick, 2007). Indeed, a good case study requires the use of multiple sources of evidence to ensure robust conclusions (Yin, 2012). Thus, observations, individual interviews, focus group discussions and examination of school

records were used as the main data collection sources in this study. The first step of data collection began with observations.

Observations

The observations included studying the setting and observing faculty members interacting with their students in their classrooms, as evidenced in Appendix C. The observation guide was researcher produced because of the unique nature of this study. The purpose of the observations was to gain insight about the nature and content of the interactions between faculty and students in order to understand the perceptions of faculty members about French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy. At this point in the data collection, careful field notes were taken during the observations. The observations focused primarily on faculty members as they interacted with their students in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Observations lasted one class period at a time and included eight participants selected out of the sample of 12 faculty members. These faculty members were among some of the most experienced instructors at the college level. Finally, all observations were labeled and classified to keep track of the collected data.

The benefit of beginning with observations is that they allowed me as an investigator to be familiar with both the environment and the participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This familiarity in turn may have facilitated more candid answers from the respondents. Additionally, having witnessed exchanges between faculty and students allowed me to formulate more practical questions as an investigator. Finally, observations

are essential in capturing data in their natural environment (Mulhall, 2003), as they can provide insight into the interactions between instructors and French speaking students.

Individual Interviews

After the observations, the same eight participants who had been previously observed were interviewed individually using the guide developed in Appendix B. For reasons of in-depth exploration of this one problem in order to better understand it, the interview questionnaire was researcher created to fit the reality of this setting (IUGB). The purpose of these interviews was to further explore ideas, stories, or themes, some of which were witnessed. This strategy that consists in interviewing the participants after observing them is highly effective in that it provides a continuity, follow-up and commonality among events and topics (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

Interviews were face-to-face and audio-recorded. There was no instance where face-to-face meeting was an issue for me or the participants. Participants were readily available for an interview after the observation phase was completed. Interviews were semistructured with focused questions to delve into the individual's story or experience. Interviews were conducted in English since all faculty members are required to be fluent in English before being able to teach at the university. Additionally, interviews lasted 39 to 58 minutes long depending on the level of involvement of the participant. The rationale was to avoid losing the participant's interest while collecting data that corroborated or differed from the themes or sub-themes that emerged from the different views and opinions. Furthermore, data saturation dictated whether all interviews were effectively conducted to the fullest of the scheduled time. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson

(2006) defined saturation as the point in data collection where new information provides little or no changes to the major themes. Finally, I conducted the interviews ensuring that the participants were comfortable, and that all confidentiality requirements were met. Participants' privacy was safeguarded by complying with participant's rights, and interviews were conducted in a place that was appropriate and comfortable, and away from all noise to avoid any disruption.

Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to explore the participants' experiences relating to (a) students' challenges in academic literacy and (b) suggestions faculty members had to help improve academic literacy at IUGB. Unlike the individual interviews, the focus group discussed questions and offered a platform for participants to interact sharing and influencing each other's experience Kitzinger (1995). The data collection proceeded with one focus group's discussion whose content and contours are detailed in Appendix D. There were a total of seven participants in the focus group and it included three faculty members who had not been previously observed. The remaining four participants were asked and selected among the instructors who had been previously observed. Proceeding this way offered a systematic approach to organizing the participants and the upcoming discussions. Moreover, this approach had the advantage of combining "observed" and "non-observed" faculty members, delivering thereby heterogeneous sources of data collection. Because open ended questions were designed to give way to participants' personal experiences, it was hard to replicate someone else's published data collection instrument.

A small size focus group was considered for this study because it offered a unique interactive environment where each participant had a voice and risks of someone talking on top of another were scarce to none (Morgan, 1998). Morse (1994) suggested at least six participants for this type of qualitative research where the aim is to capture the essence of the participant's experience. Obtaining a homogenous group in focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009) can be done in a timely fashion when forming a smaller size group. Thus, the investigator can easily hear each participant's voice. However, this group size can be unproductive if some participants are sensitive to others such as friendship pairs dominating the discussions, or uncooperative participants who are reluctant to share their thoughts (Morgan, 1997).

The exchanges were audio-recorded for purposes of data analysis. The duration of the recording sessions was determined by the participants' schedule constraints and the actual volume of exchanges during the discussions. The exchanges lasted 93 minutes. Kitzinger (1995) suggested conducting the discussions for 1 to 2 hours for a group of six to eight participants. Both the participants and myself as the moderator were seated in a semicircle, and the discussions were structured using a funnel-based strategy. This strategy allows the participants to freely express their ideas, but it also gives the researcher autonomy to guide them toward the research questions. The challenge with this strategy is to be able to steer the participants toward the research questions without losing their interests. My role as a moderator was to ensure candid and respectful exchanges among the participants and keep the discussions focused on the research

questions. Finally, it was my role to ensure that the participants' confidentiality was respected as proper documents were signed by both the participants and the researcher.

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis in this study was articulated around coding, categorizing and triangulation of the collected data. As the data analysis process began, the first step was to create a complete inventory of the collected data. Proceeding this way had the advantage of helping me stay organized and methodical. A computer was used to this end. Next, the data were sorted and organized by codes and categories. Codes and categories were further analyzed to look for corroboration or discrepancy in an attempt to reach a theoretical explanation of the problem. This process was done both manually as well as using computer programs such as Word Processor, Database Manager, Spreadsheets, and Graphics. For instance, after transcribing data into the computer, I printed out all the codes and laid them out in front of me, in order to have a "unit" view before starting a more refined analysis.

Coding and Categorizing

Qualitative researchers almost always have to shed their data because they end up collecting more data than they need (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Mine encompassed observations and field notes, reflection memos, conversation notes, transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions. These data were classified according to their initial purposes, landing themselves to analytical files (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), whereby generic codes were created based on the content of the files. Developing this

preliminary coding system was the starting point of my data analysis. Keeping a sense of data organization made the bulk easier to manage (Glesne, 2011).

Next, a systematic search for patterns and identification of overarching themes was completed as recommended by Saldana (2012). This process took place after transcribing the individual interviews and focus group discussions. Data transcription was done progressively during the collection process to avoid losing some ideas. As I read the transcripts line by line, I set aside code words in the margin that helped explain a concept or an idea. I also looked for particular words used by the participants as they can be coded under the same concept because they may exemplify one aspect of the problem. Saldana (2012) explained that coding is particularly important because it captures the essence of the collected data. I then arranged the codes by categories and subcategories, which I used color codes to separate. This part was done manually. For reasons of redundancy, overlap, or similarity I determined places where some codes could be combined and where other codes may be pulled apart. Where codes may be dropped for new ones I did so for a more rigorous analysis. The codes were then reduced to a manageable seven themes around which I wrote a detailed descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2012). Creswell suggested that some selection criteria could be the most frequently talked about code, the most unique, the most surprising etc…

Field notes and observations notes were all compiled, compared and examined in order to look for possible emerging ideas. This process paved the way to an initial coding of prominent trends and ideas of the data sources. The same rigorous analytical process used to examine the transcripts was applied here as well. I refrained from setting pre-

determined categories because I wanted the data to unveil the different ideas or themes. Proceeding this way was congruent with coding and categorizing in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002). During the data analysis, the field notes and observation notes were used mainly to provide corroboration, details, and pertinence to the findings.

Finally, major themes were further looked at and compared to check for support with other sources of data. A combination of open/emergent coding was used in this study so as to allow a progressive and thorough discovery of the collected data. To realize this, I used more abstract words to label the themes that are generated throughout the data. Supportive data were discussed with the aim of generalization of students' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB, as well as faculty members' suggestions to help improve student literacy at IUGB. Discrepant data were further discussed to accomplish an in-depth look at the issue of students' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB, and to control quality in the study.

Triangulation and Validity

Constant check and recheck of the data and the diverse sources of data is essential to uncover solid findings (Yin, 2012). Data gathered from my notes, the observations, the focus group discussions and interviews were examined and compared to strengthen the findings. During this process, major themes were compared for representation of meaning from the underlying data and legitimation of findings. This "recursive and dynamic" process of data analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 169) detailed how the technique of triangulation was used. Triangulation is applied to check for pertinent findings (Flick,

2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a result, the data were reduced and discrepant data were discussed for further interpretations. Because triangulation involves the comparison of multiple sources of data, it provides rigor to the analysis, a cornerstone to validity and credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

More techniques of analysis included member checking for authentic statements and interpretations. This is the process by which participants who were interviewed for this study, were asked to verify the correct transcription and translation of their statements and answers (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The goal was to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the investigation. Additionally, personal and intellectual biases were stated at the outset of this study to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Finally, peer reviewing was solicited with more experienced researchers to ensure proper methodology and strong discussions throughout the research study. Fellow students who have traveled down this road were asked to share their reviewing experiences during this step of the project study. Also, during this process, experienced instructors as well as mentors were constantly called upon for their input. Critical external eyes looking into my study can only reinforce the rigorous analysis necessary for such a research study (Creswell, 2012).

Conclusion

In light of the purpose of this study, a qualitative case study research design was the best research approach. A purposeful sample strategy was used as faculty members were selected from the different schools of the university based on their backgrounds as well as their gender. The rationale was to seek diversity in discussions and opinions. As

the data collection began, sources included observation notes, focus group discussions, and individual interviews. Next, the data analysis phase was driven by coding the major themes and categorizing them to finally transcribing the data. Ultimately, the data collection methods and sources, along with the different techniques of data analysis led to answering the research question about the perceptions of IUGB faculty relating to the academic literacy challenges faced by IUGB French speaking students in Cote d'Ivoire. At the conclusion of this project study, the outcome was to make suggestions that would help address the issues of academic literacy at IUGB. The goals and rationale were discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis Results

The data in this study were generated from four main sources: classroom observations, individual interviews, focus groups discussions, and field notes and reflections. Spending time with the participants in my study quickly helped me bond with them as they jokingly introduced me to their colleagues as one of them and the newest faculty member. That type of bond has been noted by research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010). I made sure to use it to my advantage as I was able to glean information here and there relevant to my research. When combining all the data that I collected, I was both impressed and overwhelmed at the amount and volume of information in my hand. As I turned to research again, I recalled that Lofland and Lofland (1995) observed that researchers almost always have to shed information because they end up with more than they need. The following process explained how that much information was obtained.

Data Collection Process

This process was divided into two steps: the participants in the study and the collection of data.

- The participants: eight participants were individually observed in their classrooms and subsequently interviewed. Four of the observed instructors were female instructors and four were males. The university (IUGB) was composed of three schools: the University Preparatory Program (UPP), the School of Business (SB), and the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) School. Two of the observed participants came from the UPP. Two came from the SB and one participant was an instructor at both the UPP and the SB. The remaining three came from the STEM school. Finally, among the participants, five were full-time instructors and two were part-time instructors. In addition, I conducted one focus group discussion that brought together seven participants among whom were three female instructors and four male instructors. The discussions included two participants from the UPP, two from the SB, one from both the UPP/SB, and two from the STEM school. Of the seven participants, five were full-time instructors and two were working on the part-time basis. In keeping with the spirit of my proposal, the participants from all three data sources came from different backgrounds. There was one American instructor, one Asian (from the Philippines), three Africans non-local, and six Ivorian (native of Cote d'Ivoire). Four of the Ivorians had been trained and had completed their doctoral degrees in American universities. Two had been trained in Great Britain and one completed

his higher studies at Alberta, Canada. A summary of the participants who were interviewed and their backgrounds is offered (Chapter 2, Table 1). For reasons of protection and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used.

Table 1

Individual Interview Participants and Backgrounds

Participants	*Gender*	*School*	*Origin*	*Language*	*Status*
Lisa	Female	UPP	USA	English	Full-time
Kathy	Female	UPP	Cote d'Ivoire	French	Fulltime
Matthew	Male	Business	Cote d'Ivoire	French	Part-time
Paulette	Female	Business	Philippines	English	Full-time
Alice	Female	Business	Cote d'Ivoire	French	Full-time
Dominique	Male	STEM	Cote d'Ivoire	French	Part-time
Larry	Male	STEM	North-Africa	French/Arab	Part-time
David	Male	STEM	Cote d'Ivoire	French	Full-time

- The collection of data: I began the data collection by observing the participants teach a regular class period. I completed eight observations that averaged 75 minutes each over a five day-period. Observations took place in the morning as well as in the afternoon as I followed my participants' schedules. I captured the class sequences, contents, and my personal notes and reflections in a Word document on my lap-top computer. My guiding tool during this phase was the observation guide (Appendix C) that I developed prior to arriving to the setting. Next, all eight instructors who had been previously observed were interviewed. It was important to follow-up with ideas, interactions and instructional activities that I had witnessed during the observations. Participants were invited to sign a consent form after an explanation of their rights to confidentiality. Interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis in a semistructure manner and were audio

recorded. Probes were used to seek development or clarification of ideas. Interviews took place immediately after class, either in the instructor's office or in a quiet room around campus, and lasted between 39-58 minutes each. Interview questions are reflected in Interview Guide in Appendix B.

In conclusion of this phase, a focus group discussion was conducted using the pre-developed questionnaire in Appendix D. Again, I used a semistructure format where all participants sat in a circle in a quiet and comfortable room on campus. After signing consent forms, participants readily engaged into discussions where they shared their experiences candidly and freely. The discussions lasted 92 minutes. Two of the participants took notes as they captured their ideas for fear of losing them before they could talk. They all waited for one another to finish talking before intervening as they even raised their hand to ask to speak. The discussions were audio recorded for transcription purposes.

The Findings

This qualitative case study research stemmed from studying the problem of academic literacy at IUGB. In order to carry out the study, I developed three guiding questions:

1. What are the perceptions of IUGB faculty about the academic literacy challenges faced by IUGB French speaking students?
2. What are the experiences of faculty members at IUGB in instructing, evaluating, and advising French speaking students?

3. What suggestions do faculty members have for improving student academic literacy at IUGB?

After several readings and comparisons of the transcribed data, patterns and recurrent themes emerged. Following qualitative research experts' recommendations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2008; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2012), I combed through the volume of data that were collected. These experts suggested coding and categorizing the data in an effort to uncover thematic ideas throughout the collected data. So, I created and classified the emerging codes that I soon collapsed into categories and sub-categories. I further analyzed the different categories which eventually yielded 8 main themes (Saldana, 2012) based on the research questions. As a result of this study, it was clear that the perceptions of IUGB faculty were rooted in their experiences in interacting with French speaking students (Chapter 2, Table 2). Thus, many a time, research questions 1 and 2 intertwined because it was hard to separate instructors' perceptions from their experiences (see table 1). At the time when the findings were being written, each participant was then given a pseudonym (for individual interviews) and a number (for focus group discussions) to help with the narrative fluency and to further protect their confidentiality. The themes were examined next beginning with the listening comprehension difficulties.

Table 2

Findings Aligned by Research Questions 1 and 2

Research questions	Listening comprehension issues	Speaking issues	Writing issues	College career issues	Cultural conflict
Research Question #1 & Research Question #2	1.Problem understanding lectures 2.Lack of readiness to course level 3.Lack of familiarity with subject 4.Unprepared to class 5. Failure to engage voluntary reading/practice	1.Lack of proficiency 2.Lack of vocabulary 3.Failure to read 4.Code switching 5.Lack of confidence 6.Problems of pronunciation	1.Poor college level writing skills 2.Citation problems 3.Paraphrasing problems 4.Plagiarism 5.Poor reading skills 6.Writing in 1st language, then translating into English		
Research Question #2				1.Gap between college readiness & college expectations 2.Feelings of Frustration & overwhelming instructional demands 3.Failure to seek adequate help	1.Constant Socio-cultural clash between Anglo-Saxon Culture and local culture 2.Inconsistent/ weak supporting measures to instructional language 3.Lack of environmental opportunities for fast fluency

Listening Comprehension Issues

The analysis of the data revealed that French speaking students displayed some deficiencies in listening comprehension as related to the comprehension of class content, class materials, and class lectures. This problem was raised during the focus group

discussions and was also confirmed by five of the eight individual interviewees. The participants in the study explained these deficiencies by the lack of familiarity with the topics and/or concepts discussed in class. Alice, a business instructor, said her students were totally lost when she first introduced the notion of saving account as a way to grow money. She added that it was understandable because culturally, young adults learn about banking only at the beginning of their professional careers, although things have begun to change. Dominique, a physics instructor, stated: "Sometimes when you're trying to explain technical concepts the students cannot get them. They don't understand. What I try to do is explain it is using different words". Kathy detailed more the problem in the following terms:

> My interactions with French speaking students were a bit difficult at first because I could tell the students didn't perceive well or didn't understand what I was saying to them. It was a learning process for me as well because I had to slow down; I recap after every sentence to make sure they understand, repeat and explain over and over again… at the beginning of the semester, I would ask a question and the whole class would stare at me as if I was talking to the wall, like no reaction at all.

Another problem for French speaking students in listening comprehension is their lack of preparedness for class. All the participants in the study without exception claimed that students simply would not read the materials for class and did not attempt to have an idea for what was expected to be known. Matthew summed up this problem by saying "It is not surprising that only two or three (students) may have read an assigned chapter

before class. I am having to lecture a class without getting any feedback". I did notice that there were very few interactions between students and instructors during my individual observations. However, the participants made it clear that students would read if they were forced to, as in cases where they had to turn in an assignment based on a reading passage.

Finally, the participants tied French speaking students' listening comprehension issues to the diverse speaking accents of the instructors at IUGB. Clearly, it is easy to imagine how confused ELL students may be, if they have to decipher each instructor's accent every time they attend class. As a result of their inability to understand their instructors, students tuned out due to frustration. David, a mathematics instructor, claimed that listening comprehension may be the area where
French speaking students experienced the most difficulties. He said,

> I can identify with that (listening comprehension) myself. When I write some words in English everybody understands. They cannot keep up with listening in English for a long time. I think listening is definitely difficult. It's not writing, at least for my students. The fact is students are exposed to all sorts of accents from their instructors who come from diverse places: Texas (US), England, Ghana, Nigeria, France…They have to listen with the utmost attention to understand each one. However, if the message is written, then they can understand it right away. Students understand faster what you write as opposed to what you say because of the accent. So I write a lot on the white board.

One conclusion that can be drawn here is that French speaking students were faced with two problems: Understanding English, the instructional language and understanding the content of their classes.

Speaking Difficulties

Perhaps speaking was by far the most obvious difficulty impeding academic literacy for French speaking students as this problem can be readily captured without going to great measures. The findings showed that French speaking students displayed a lack of proficiency in the instructional language. This lack of proficiency was characterized by a lack of expressive vocabulary and by simply code-switching whereby French students resorted to speaking French to express themselves. The findings also showed that freshmen experienced greater difficulties in speaking. I witnessed several students struggling through their presentations during two different classroom observations in the UPP. Students were fairly at ease when presenting their topics. However, they had difficulty explaining supportive ideas or had problems defending their positions with more details when confronted with unexpected stances. This problem was brought up by all eight individual interviewees as well as in the focus group discussions. Kathy, an instructor in the UPP had no doubt as to French speaking students' main difficulty: "Speaking is the area where they experience the most difficulty. They have to be confident to speak in general. It is usually the confident students that will speak." During the focus group discussions, all the participants agreed that students faced significant speaking difficulties. Participant 2 reported that "students participate based on their confidence level (in English). More fluent students participate more." Clearly, lack

of confidence is a factor in speaking difficulties experienced by French speaking students. Participant 5 added that freshmen and sophomores tended to withdraw from class participation precisely because of their lack of fluency. Participant 6 summed up the issue by saying "Language is a challenge for them (students) especially for freshmen." Additionally, Larry, a biology instructor warned his students about code-switching and complacency in French usage:

> As you noticed, they tend to speak French even during class. I would say no (I tell them don't). The environment is French. All around campus, what they speak is French. They won't speak English. I think this is a barrier for their language acquisition. This has been my observation. I always tell them, if you want to improve your English, you must get rid of French. Because I have traveled that road before, I can relate to that.

French speaking students' difficulties in speaking are also seen in pronunciation. Matthew, a former UPP instructor now a Business instructor explained how students struggled sounding out the differences between "the", "ve", and "f". He stated "Some of them struggle a lot in pronunciation. Their pronunciation is very close to French. To help them, I tend to write words in phonetics." In face of these challenges, some students either shy away or simply shut down for fear of being ridiculed in front of their peers as discussed in the focus group.

As revealed in the findings, French speaking students experienced speaking difficulties as seen in their lack of proficiency in English rooted in their lack of vocabulary, problems of pronunciation, and lack of confidence.

Writing Difficulties

The data showed that French speaking students experienced a number of difficulties in writing including a) grammatical errors; b) basic writing methodology (how to organize ideas from topic sentence to supporting ideas), and c) citations issues. The participants in the study stressed the fundamental difference between the French educational system where students were used to writing one way, and the American educational system where they are being asked to write differently. As related by some participants, students were used to writing with long and unnecessary phrases describing what they were going to do. They just circled without going straight to the point in their writing. Yet, without any preparation or training, French speaking students were being required to write another way to meet the demands American style of college level writing. From the focus group discussions, participant 2 (native French speaker) testified to this issue as she recounted her own struggles adjusting to the writing style in an American university as a student. She pointed out that because of the radical change in writing, (going straight to the point) it took her two semesters to finally grasp the new demands of American college level writing. Participant 7 detailed the problem in the following terms:

> I teach writing and it's very difficult for them (students) for two main reasons; cultural background and educational background. Cultural background first. When you ask them to write an essay, instead of going straight to the topic, they beat around the bush. This is the African attitude. That is cultural… The next point is the educational background. The way essays are written in French is

> totally different from the American way. In a way, it is similar to the African background. So I have to make them see that's not the way essays are written now. I have to help them move gradually from that previous knowledge to another framework…I spend nearly one month on that before tackling anything else.

Students were also being required to cite and paraphrase when they had never been taught how to properly research, write, and quote ideas and statements that did not belong to them. This issue was raised again and again during the focus group discussions as students were said to wonder why instructors were making plagiarism such a major concern. Lisa, an instructor in the UPP best summed up this issue when she said:

> The next biggest problem has everything to do with writing, and that's just because they never had to do any type of writing like we do in the American system, especially looking at academic papers where they have to do research. So many times they want to cut and paste from the internet. They have been taught that that's ok but on the academic side of things when you start getting into University, knowing some of these kids will eventually go to Graduate school, I am trying to teach them that that's not ok. We know that's not ok, plagiarism. Yes! Plagiarism is not okay and there are consequences to that and it's more than you are stealing someone's words, it's also that you will fail the class and get kicked out of the school.

The issue of writing properly was very widespread to all students including upper classmen. It was not just an issue faced by freshmen. Paulette, a business instructor declared,

> I noticed that they have an unclear conception about plagiarism. In terms of writing about something, I have seen that they copy without citing. So I discourage them from doing this. They don't seem to be aware this. But I tell them this is something you should be aware of especially in the upper classes. For some students, I can tell that they already know the policy and are simply disregarding it.

Another writing issue that was revealed was that French speaking students still wrote their ideas/essays in French then translated them in English. Dominique, Kathy, and Larry stated that when students had an essay to write, they often wrote it in French first, then, they translated it in English. This issue was also echoed in the focus group discussion. Participant 5 reported (with everyone in agreement) that in biology, students often wrote their essays, and then translated the entire body of work using an electronic aid. She knew this by questioning her students. Unsure of their own skills in the instructional language, French speaking students would frame their thoughts in the first language before translating in English. Also, they tended to write down their answers before verbalizing them as a measure of confidence building even during a verbal exchange. That is, as Dominique put it "They lack critical skills to complete (lab) reports." The instructional leadership seems to be aware of this since students with deficiencies in writing are supposed to attend writing classes. However, instructors complained that students were not taking full advantage of this opportunity. As the participants complained, the underlying reason for much of French speaking students' writing issues was their lack of motivation to read. The participants explained that

because students would not read, they could not discover, or be exposed to different ideas and styles, acquire more vocabulary and grow as writers as a result.

In short, French speaking students' writing difficulties were seen in grammatical errors, lack of organization, citation issues, and literal translation. Much of these issues stemmed from French students' lack of transition from the French to the American styles of education.

University Culture Shock

An overwhelming majority of students at IUGB completed their secondary studies in a francophone country where they had received little or no training relative to American style of higher studies. Additionally, they came from an educational system where there was very little room for research training or self-directed learning (Sakellariou & Patrinos, 2009). Now they had to take ownership of their learning by taking initiatives and undergo a transformation of their approach to tertiary education. Matthew, a business instructor, captured best this issue when he said "The challenge they face is that they don't know much about American higher education, particularly the way American universities function, and what is expected of them." Matthew maintained that this issue could be considered as the first challenge for French speaking students. In instructing French speaking students, the participants in the study revealed that most students were unprepared to handle the expectations of an American style of higher education beginning with the instructional language. One reason was that up until this point in their studies, students had been educated in French by French speaking teachers in a French style education. Suddenly, they were being required to perform in a different

language at college level. As documented earlier, students were experiencing tremendous emotions of overwhelming and frustration as a result. In addition, students had to engage into independent research for which they had not been trained. This translated into what Matthew called "the banking concept", whereby students reported to class and simply expected to be taught (deposit knowledge in their heads) as if they were still in a French secondary school. Paulette echoed the same remark as she stated: "I tell them that I'm here to facilitate knowledge, not to transfer knowledge." Participatory learning where the learner takes ownership of his/her learning was a new and unexpected concept for them. Discussions from the focus group recognized that students' educational world had been turned upside down. Participant 3 pointed out that students were having a hard time in college because they were not familiar with what they were being taught or what was being required of them. He explained that because "they had never seen such educational concept before, they were unable to relate." Participant 7 seemed to translate everyone's thought when he stated that the biggest shock for French speaking students was to adapt to the new way of learning. He detailed that

> They (students) come from a top down educational system where they received their knowledge from teachers considered as god-like characters. Now they come here and they are expected to be critical, reflective and independent, interact with the teacher, disagree, and even evaluate the teacher at time. That's not part of the French system.

Discussions revealed clearly that students faced a significant challenge transitioning to their new college careers.

Students' Attitude Towards Advisement

With new educational demands placed on them, it was expected that students would need support to navigate their new world. Yet they would not seek help or take advantage of counseling/advising hours that each full-time instructor had to offer. Although instructors reported interacting informally with students on campus, very few students actually booked appointments with their instructor for instructional purposes. Kathy detailed this concern in the followings terms:

> They don't ask for help. They don't ask for advice. In spite of the fact that I reiterated in class that I have office hours and come and see me, email me. I repeat that a lot in class. In general, they don't. When I see that they're really struggling, at the end of class, I would invite the particular students to see me, or I would book an appointment for him/her. To date I think I've had 3 students altogether out of 100 to come and talk to me about their academic concerns. I had a student who was really weak, and constantly recorded "F". I persuaded him to get help. He finally approached and said "Miss I need help". I went over the lessons with him, recapped the essential notions, gave him a few more exercises and some extra work. Today I am happy to see that he scored 100% on his last quiz.

The participants in the focus group echoed the same remark as they all regretted that students rarely made appointments on their own to discuss instructional matters. Despite the obvious benefits resulting from getting extra help, it appeared that French speaking students did not take advantage of helping hands. Dominique seemed to nuance

this concern somewhat saying that “Some students do seek advice with me. When I think they’re coming to discuss homework problems, they want to talk about career options such as becoming chemical or mechanical engineers”. One interpretation can be that French speaking students liked to engage in casual conversations with their instructors. However, they resented discussing their academic weaknesses or performance issues with their instructors. Still, there is reason to believe that this behavior takes root in the lack of initiative that French speaking students had been used to at the secondary level. Because they had been used to “receiving” the expected course knowledge, they were slow at reacting or adjusting to the new reality, as no transition prepared them to their new world.

Socio-cultural Conflict

French speaking students were facing an uphill battle in light of the issues they had to deal with. They had to conquer the language barrier at IUGB then, they had to perform in their regular subjects the way a native speaker would. Instructors were not grading them any differently because they had a French background. Clearly the expectations were not watered down because of who they were or because of the difficult situation they were in. Alice testified saying “One thing I don’t do is water down the contents (of the lesson) just because some students may be weak in English or fresh out the UPP. I assess them at the level that they are supposed to be at.” However, students’ social, cultural, political and economic environments were exclusively French. The news media surrounding them, the social media that they used, their families and relatives with whom they lived and interacted were all embedded in the francophone (French speaking) culture. Time and time again, the participants complained that students returned to

speaking French immediately after class. Sometimes they even spoke French during class quietly among themselves. In relation to this, Paulette stated "I ask my students why they are speaking French outside class. Their answer is that it is a bad habit. My response is change it then if you know it's a bad habit." This habit translates a profound and noticeable French/English and English/French culture around campus where French appears to be the dominant language as reflected by the local environment. Given this obvious socio-cultural conflict, one would expect to see strong measures to support and motivate students and help them overcome their academic literacy issues.

Yet the participants complained of a lack of clear policy enforcing the use of English around campus. As I was able to witness this around campus, it was a very common sight and an ordinary happening to see students engaged in conversations in French. Students did not feel any pressure or any coercion to use the instructional language outside of the classrooms. Judging by the students' conduct, it was hard to tell that English was the language to be spoken. In fact, "catching" students speaking English was the uncommon sight, although it did happen. If there was a policy enforcing the use of English outside the classrooms, then it was not articulated by any of the participants. That explains why Dominique suggested "This is a problem that the entire university needs to work on." In light of the multitude of problems, the participants were asked for solutions to help resolve some of the issues. They are discussed in the next theme.

Suggestions from Faculty Members

Throughout the interviews and the focus group discussions, it appeared that instructors had a clear idea about how to help French speaking students overcome their

challenges in academic literacy. From using instructional strategies in the classrooms to implementing new policies or programs, the participants were candid about their own remedies and the appeal they addressed to the administration. The table below captures the essence of the participants' ideas to help with their students' challenges in academic literacy.

Table 3

Summary of Findings Relating to Research Question #3

Instructors' responses to students' difficulties	Proposals
Brief oral/written presentations	Hire tutors
Class discussions	Recruit more non-native (to Cote d'Ivoire) English speaking instructors
Use of technology	Recruit more English speaking students
Assign guided research papers	Implement linguistic immersions in English speaking countries
Ability grouping	Enforce a stricter English only around campus
Code-switching	Create & participate in clubs (English, reading…)
Office hours for advisement	Enforce registration deadlines

Instructors' Responses to Students' Challenges

Instructors were already using different techniques and strategies to tackle some of their students' deficiencies. For example, in order to make them read, write a proper research paper, and speak more, some instructors often assigned their students short presentations about a current event or any topic of interest to the students. Students then had the option of presenting their articles/papers using a Word document or a PowerPoint

presentation. Instructors sometimes decided to assign a full length research paper for which much time was given to the students with very specific guidelines. For instance, Dominique required his students to write a research paper for the duration of one semester. He allowed students to select a topic of their choice. Then, using a rubric, they had to show progress by documenting their work at pre-determined checkpoints. Then, he collected their papers at the end of the semester as a part of their semester grades. Paulette, on the other hand explained that she often assigned group activities where students formulated and answered their own questions. She asked her students to research and present case analyses on a regular basis. Additionally, she made oral participation as a part of her students' grades. As for Alice, Kathy, Matthew to name just a few, they reported that they conducted regular in-class discussions following short presentations, where students had to interact with one another using the target language. In general, an overwhelming majority of instructors provided extra help to their struggling students by spending more time with them in class. But Alice in particular indicated that she systematically tested her students at the beginning of the semester in order to identify the different levels of proficiency. Then, she explained how she paired them up following a strong/weak ability criterion. She reported achieving a more successful and balanced class of students. Finally, instructors acknowledged code-switching to help their students in dire situations. Code-switching happened when instructors translated a word, a concept, or a phrase in French to help student grasp the essence of the lesson being taught. At least four participants justified using code-switch as a last minute, last resort

technique to create an "aha" moment for their students because after all, they want them to be successful.

Instructors' Proposals

Being in the forefront of improving student literacy skill, instructors came forward with a set of solutions to support students and help address the language barrier at IUGB. That is a sort of wish-list that they would like the administration to address. For instance, Kathy would like to hire professional tutors to provide targeted help to struggling students in an effort to be effective with students in need. Some instructors proposed to send students to English speaking countries, either in the region (Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria…) or to the United States for a few semesters to immerse them in both the instructional language and the culture that comes with it. Larry argued that "…keeping these students in their natural environment won't help them improve their English." But if this is hard to do because of the heavy expenses involved then, the university could recruit more English speaking students in the wider region according to other instructors. Paulette is convinced that the more students are speaking English around campus, the more speaking French will look odd or simply wrong. Furthermore, the participants argued that creating clubs such as an English club, a debate club or a book club, a media club, where students would meet to exchange, discuss and learn from one another under the supervision of instructor/sponsors can be tremendously beneficial to students. Participant 2 from the focus group went further, as she explained that every student could be required to read at least one book (among a dozen choices) per semester. Students would then regularly present and discuss the content of the books in class. The

idea was to push and develop a motivation for reading. Paulette added that recruiting non-native English speaking instructors could drive students to speak and communicate more frequently using the instructional language. As it was, she pointed out that some students were comfortable approaching local instructors using French as they assumed a common identity with them. Finally, Lisa called on the administration to enforce the registration deadline. She explained that at times, students had been admitted to class as late as two weeks after the deadline. Obviously, that created a situation where a student who was facing a language barrier was falling further behind at the offset of the semester. In the end, the participants seemed to be all in agreement that a stricter policy enforcing the use of English in and out of the classroom should be in effect at all times. Finally, one suggestion that was only discussed in the focus group centered on offering a free semester class, or at least an hour or two per week built in the regular curriculum, where students would learn to cope with the transition between the French secondary educational system and the American style of tertiary education. This class would be mandatory to all French speaking students, whether they tested out or not from the preparatory program. The aim would be to equip new students with the basic necessary skills to succeed in their new educational careers.

What transpired in the data was that instructors were working to support and improve their students' learning experiences. However, each of them was doing this in his/her own way without collaboration on working strategies for students. As a result, one instructor may be using best practices but another could be doing something different. They did not seem to collectively adopt a set of strategies that would be implanted across

the board in a systematic fashion to offer a stronger support to students in all their classes. In addition, there appeared to be no vertical alignment where under and upper classmen instructors would communicate on the basic minimum expectations that students must meet as they moved from the UPP to the regular college classes. Only one time did one UPP instructor (Lisa) mention that she had conversations with another instructor about what students were expected to know as they began their next classes.

Evidence of Quality Procedures

As a primary means of validating the findings, I constantly compared the three data sources, namely my observation notes, the individual interviews and the focus group discussions. The experts recommended comparing data sources, a method of analysis known as triangulation, in order to strengthen the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2012). The purpose was to look for a confirmation of the findings and to identify any discrepant data. In this study, it was hard to find any discrepant data as all the participants seemed to share similar experiences. The difference was the degree or extent to which they experienced the problem being studied.

Next, Participants in the study were allowed the opportunity to check their statements for accuracy by reviewing their interview transcripts. As a result, only minor cosmetic changes were made to the original transcripts. Additionally, findings and final analysis were shared with participants so they could review their statements. This member checking, a process through which the participants check for accuracy of their statements, is important to achieve credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Hatch, 2002; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Finally, as mentioned before, the data were

carefully studied in order to look for patterns to eventually unfold in themes that I have discussed above. Also, in order to safe guard the validity of the study, I declared my biases and ensured the protection of the participants' confidentiality throughout the entire study.

Summary of Findings

It appeared clear throughout the different exchanges with the participants in this study that they had a thorough knowledge of the challenges faced by their French speaking students in academic literacy. However, in their own words, they did not hold all the solutions to help improve their students' literacy skills. Through all three questions in this study, I sought to document the issue of academic literacy in the eyes of the participants.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of IUGB faculty about the academic literacy challenges faced by IUGB French speaking students?

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of faculty members at IUGB in instructing, evaluating, and advising French speaking students?

Research questions 1 and 2 are grouped together because they have a strong commonality in that the perceptions of faculty members cannot be disassociated from their experiences in instructing their students. If one considers the empiricist theory which contends that our knowing proceeds first from our experiences, then it is understandable to collapse the findings from both research questions together.

All the participants reported that students had challenges in listening, speaking, and writing. They also reported that students faced issues of college readiness and

environmental culture dominance. In listening, students displayed problems understanding lectures, lacked familiarity with course subject, and were unprepared for class. One reason that pointed out by the participants was that students refused to engage in voluntary or self-directed reading.

In speaking, students lacked proficiency in English seen in their lack of vocabulary and constant use of the first language. Problems of pronunciation were reported as students used the instructional language with a heavy accent from the first language. Also, they often displayed a lack of self-confidence that caused them to shy away from speaking English. Participants reported that only confident students made strides as they were the ones who dared to speak English often in class. Again, students' failure to read on their own, coupled with the use of the first language were mentioned as some of the causes of their speaking difficulties.

According to the participants, students' difficulties in writing were significant. Students did not know how to properly cite or did not cite at all. They were unfamiliar with plagiarism or did not understand the concept as they would cut and paste in their writings. Participants also observed that students did not know how to paraphrase an author's idea. For instance, science instructors complained that students displayed numerous grammatical errors along with vocabulary issues in their laboratory reports. At least five of the participants felt that students were unprepared to start their college studies, or they simply needed some remediation classes. They noted that a number of students continued to write their thoughts or papers in French and then, translated in

English. Once again, participants agreed that if students read more on their own, that would have a positive effect on their writings.

More findings revealed that because of the expectations aforementioned, coupled with the self-directed learning nature in college with which they were unfamiliar, French speaking students were frustrated and overwhelmed as they struggled to make sense of their tertiary education at least for freshmen. Participants did observe that upper classmen did better as they had been acclimated to college level expectations. Additionally, participants declared that students did not seek help even if it was offered to them. At least one participant mentioned that students did ask for help but only to discuss general matters instead of focusing on their class performance issues.

Finally, the participants observed that students faced a constant clash between the new dominant culture (English) and the omni-present French speaking environmental culture. French speaking students went to class where they were required to speak English, and then came back to an environment where French was the dominant language. No tangible measures were enforced which would motivate students to speak the target language. As a result, participants came up with some suggestions which are summarized under research question 3.

Research Question 3: What suggestions do faculty members have for improving student academic literacy at IUGB?

The participants were very specific in their suggestions to help improve student academic literacy at IUGB. First, they shared some instructional strategies that they had been using as a response to support their students. For instance, some instructors assigned reading

passages or research papers to their students as a training method. Others required oral presentations and discussions in class. In short, the participants shared that they required their students to read, write, listen, and speak in the forms of graded assignments as ways to make students practice and improve their language proficiency. The second part of the participants' suggestions was a set of proposals to the administrative authorities, as they were called upon to contribute to the overall literacy program at IUGB. The proposals were:

- Hire tutors to help struggling students
- Recruit more non-native (to Cote d'Ivoire) English speaking instructors
- Recruit more English speaking students
- Implement linguistic immersions in English speaking countries
- Enforce stricter English only around campus
- Create & participate in clubs (English club, reading club…)
- Enforce registration deadlines

In the end, it became clear that the analysis of the data led to unveiling the issue of academic literacy at IUGB as seen by faculty members. If research questions 1 and 2 focused on the problem per se, research question 3 centered on suggesting solutions. One lesson that can be drawn is that students faced a multitude of difficulties relating to the process of acquisition of academic literacy. As instructors addressed this issue in their own way, administrative leaders were also called upon to help improve students' proficiency in the target language.

Discussion and Interpretation

The findings showed that French speaking students experienced difficulties in listening, speaking, and writing. Reading did appear as an issue however, the issue was described as students' lack of willingness to read, either to prepare for class or to engage in self-directed reading. This particular aspect of reading was not seen in the literature review. The other aforementioned difficulties are congruent with research in the wider literature. For instance, in listening, Bifuh-Ambe (2011) observed that ELL experienced difficulties in listening tasks such as lectures, as students felt overwhelmed with the fast flow of information at a time. At least three participants reported that students often felt lost and were unable to keep up with their lectures.

In speaking, French speaking students were not different from other ELLs portrayed in the literature. They experienced problems of pronunciation as did other ELLs (Cuetos et al., 2009). However, French speaking students' pronunciation issues were impacted by their French language background. For example, French speaking students were unable to properly say words written with "th" as they read them as "f". Further, all the participants declared that French speaking students continued to speak French both inside and outside the classroom. Cuetos et al., (2009) stated that ELLs withdrew from class participation for fear of embarrassment or found refuge in their first language as they lack the confidence necessary to speak up in front of their peers. Undoubtedly, doing so for these students was a way to stay in a safe zone where their literacy skills (or lack of) were not exposed. Yet according to Krashen (1982), language cannot be produced if it has not been stored up previously. Vygotsky (1987) added that

cognitive development only takes place through social interactions. In light of these theoretical stances, one can imagine the challenge that French speaking students are faced with at IUGB.

In writing, French speaking students' challenges are very similar to those in the literature. Just as French speaking students lacked exposure to academic writing, so did students in the wider literature as demonstrated by Hiew (2012). Students at IUGB showed deficiencies in spelling and grammar just as did ELLs in the literature (Hiew, 2012). French students' challenges in writing peaked when they resorted to writing in the first language, and then translated in the English. Wahi et al., (2011) noted the same behavior as they attributed this practice to students' lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, and lack of training to college level writing.

Even the issue of college readiness appears to be a problem for all students only to a different degree of acuteness. If French speaking students at IUGB were struggling with transitioning from a French secondary educational system to an American style of tertiary education, other ELLs find themselves unprepared for college level expectations, including completing volumes of reading, writing and independent research (Cheng, Klinger & Zheng, 2007). At IUGB, French speaking students' challenges are compounded by both their need to adjust to college level education and adapting to an American university.

Finally, one issue that was unique to French speaking students at IUGB was their French sociocultural context. Students carried out their studies in English, whereas they continually returned to an exclusively French speaking social fabric. The entire

educational system in the country, the media, businesses, family interactions all took place in French. Therefore, the lack of supporting culture to reinforce the learning process makes it even more difficult for students in their quest of academic literacy (Gundermann, 2014).

In order to address their students' difficulties, instructors were asking for help with the administrative leaders besides the instructional strategies that they were using in their classrooms. The findings showed that each of the participants was supporting his or her students without collaborating with one another. There was no concerted effort to examine what was working in order to generalize it. Additionally, it was unclear if there was a systematic search of ways to improve students' literacy skills by using best practices. Yet the impact of best practices and collaboration has proven effective in promoting student learning (Dufour & Mattos, 2013).

Instructors realized that they were unable to tackle the problem of academic literacy on their own. The supporting role of the administration is undeniable as they are solicited by the instructors to design and implement policies facilitating student proficiency in English. Instructors' proposals focused on making the instructional language unavoidable. To this effect, immersion programs, recruiting more English native speaking instructors, along with more English speaking students could all help change the language complexion on campus where the instructional language would truly be prevalent. Byun, Chu, Kim, Park, Kim, and Jung (2010) expressed a similar idea when they wrote that English-medium universities should hire instructors with commanding knowledge in the instructional language. Indeed, unless language input is maximized as

suggested by Krashen (1982), then the much awaited proficiency (output) will be hard to achieve.

In sum, this discussion showed that French speaking students at IUGB are no different from any other ELL across the globe, although some minor details remain specific to them. One explanation is perhaps their French speaking background coupled with their unique socio-environmental context. Still, French speaking students broadly experienced the same learning difficulties at college level as their counterpart ELLs. Individual instructors had ideas centered on improving their students' language proficiency as they called upon the administration for help. However, it is unclear if such communication formally exists or if instructors are collectively implementing best practices.

Conclusion

Section 2 outlined and conveyed the various articulations of the qualitative research case study. Besides explaining why the case study research design is appropriate for this study, criteria for selecting the participants were laid out. Data collection sources and methods were delineated and data analysis procedures were specified. This was the methodology phase.

In a more practical phase, a methodical analysis of the individual interviews and the focus group discussions, along with my field notes and classroom observations yielded some results in relation with the problem and the research questions as laid out at the beginning of this section. The findings proved to be consistent with the research questions as the data showed the experiences of faculty members interacting with their

French students at IUGB. Challenges and problems were seen in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The findings revealed that French speaking students were first facing a sizeable difficulty in the language barrier. Next, they had to deal with their regular subject matter. Faculty members were also willing to help resolve some of the issues. As a result of the third research question, faculty members suggested a range of solutions going from implementing instructional strategies in the classroom, to involving the administration into planning linguistic immersions for students.

As an outcome of the results, it seemed that a set of instructional strategies, along with supportive administrative recommendations, all rooted in sound research would constitute logical suggestions to both faculty and administration. Thus, this study culminated in formulating a set of educational recommendations that highlighted proven instructional strategies in combination with some administrative policies (Appendix A) that will be presented to the administrative and instructional authorities at IUGB. The aim is to contribute to improving the literacy acquisition of French speaking students at IUGB. The content, scope and limitations of this project found a place in section 3 where they were described in detail.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

With the dominance of English as the main commercial language on the world market, nations around the globe have begun to turn to their higher education institutions to train their graduates into using this language for obvious reasons of competitiveness (Wilkins, 2011). Universities like IUGB, Cote d'Ivoire not only have adopted that belief, they have also replicated the American style of higher education. However, the overwhelming majority of students attending this institution were French speaking students, coming from a French secondary educational system, with very limited exposure to English. Such was the context at IUGB where the faculty was called upon to equip their students with the skills necessary to succeed in tertiary education.

The project itself resulted from the results of the study, as well as a review of relevant literature on literacy challenges for English language learners at university level. I solicited and analyzed the perceptions of IUGB faculty members relating to French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy. The examination of IUGB faculty members' experiences in instructing, evaluating and counseling French speaking students provided valuable findings, which in turn allowed me to suggest a number of recommendations aiming at improving French speaking students' learning process at IUGB. In this section I presented and discussed this study in its final format as recommendations for educational program improvement. I also described the rationale for this project genre rooted in a critical literature review. I further described the project

in its pre- and post-implementation phases. In the end I examined the implications of the project.

Project Description and Goals

It is fairly documented that English learning students face considerable challenges at the beginning of their college careers (Doiz et al., 2011; Huang, 2012; Kirkgoz, 2009). As discussed in Section 2, ELLs experience difficulties in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. French speaking students at IUGB are no different from other ELLs as revealed in the findings. In fact, because of their unique context, a French sociocultural environment, their challenges may appear insurmountable at times. Therefore, in order to better understand the problem, the project highlights both the context in which the study took place and the backgrounds of the students. Weaknesses in current policies are also presented. Then, a summary of the findings resulting from the data analysis is presented. Finally, research based instructional strategies and administrative policies are suggested to help address those problems. This whole process is presented in a resource guide presented as Recommendations for Educational Program Improvement. In its final format, the project reads as a self-guided informational resource that includes pragmatic, readily available teaching strategies that address French speaking students' (or ELLs) needs, both in and out of the classroom settings. The project highlights pedagogical suggestions aimed at increasing instructors' awareness about second language acquisition processes, instructional efficacy, and overall student development and success. Eventually, the project can be seen as a compass for the administration in terms of how it can accompany and support the new vision being delivered.

In designing this project, clear goals are being targeted. The first is to equip instructional and administrative leaders with new tools to help and support their students. The second is to trigger an instructional culture change around campus. The third is to enhance the curriculum by providing a new vision. Finally, I seek to heighten the call for action from all stakeholders in order to improve French speaking students' learning experience at IUGB. Outside these goals, I seek to present the problem facing French speaking students in a way that is comprehensible, evident, and significant enough to demand action. Next, solutions and recommendations are suggested in light of the uncovered evidence. These recommendations are rooted in research in order to give credibility to the project.

Rationale

The findings in this study revealed that French speaking students did experience academic literacy challenges at IUGB. These challenges were considerable for freshmen as they dove into English only classes, a new world for which they were inadequately prepared. As corroborated by the individual interviews and the focus group discussions, I was able to observe that an overwhelming majority of students consistently spoke French around campus, in the cafeteria, in their social circles, and even during class. Further, there seemed to be no clear policy or measure put in place to encourage the use of English and discourage the use of French. It is needless to demonstrate the correlation between practice and fluency in language acquisition. Krashen (1982) described this concept when he observed that there cannot be any "output" if there is no "input" in the

process of language acquisition. The individual learner must simply use the target language.

Faced with these issues, educators and administrators at IUGB could either lament and vent their frustration, in which case, the status-quo would prevail and the issues might worsen. Alternatively, they could turn to sound proposals and suggestions that address the core of these problems in order to improve French speaking students' learning experiences at IUGB. I adopted the latter position where I researched the wider literature, including similar situations to French speaking students at IUGB, and I suggested some solutions in the project. In fact, all the faculty members interviewed in this study recognized that the language barrier slowed down students' academic achievement. In response, they expressed the desire to see French speaking students' academic literacy improve. To this effect, the content of the project focused on specific strategies and recommendations to help with the academic literacy challenges faced by French speaking students at IUGB. I considered a professional development as a project. However, I was reminded that instructors at IUGB would not be active participants at preparing the potential training session. I was the sole conceptualizer of this project as I was motivated to change the instructional culture at IUGB. This implied a behavior change among faculty members. Consequently, I may run the risk of meeting some reticent behaviors (Kotter, 1999) although the participants in the study have clearly suggested that there were problems to be tackled. I also needed to avoid appearing as a "savant" outsider who knew everything, coming in to show instructors the light. One cannot forget that some of these instructors have been teaching for decades, whereas I

was just now concluding my dissertation. Therefore, to maximize the chances of the implementation of the project, it appeared logical to me that making recommendations would be ideal for instructors as well as administrators. They can use the ideas anytime without any pressure, adapt or tweak some of the strategies according to their styles and personalities, and observe, analyze, and determine the best ones for their classes. This format had the advantage of being subtle as it took into consideration the style, personality and opinion of the implementing instructor (Mento, Jone & Dirndorfer, 2002). He or she has the option of picking and choosing the best strategies for his/her classes and retaining or discarding the less effective ones. Administrators also have the option of selecting the recommendations that they see as most suitable for their context.

Review of the Literature

In an attempt to locate the literature that would support the content of the project study, I carried out a search of articles written between 1978 and 2015. Electronic databases that were used included ERIC, EBSCO, SAGE, ProQuest, Education Research Complete, and Walden University Dissertation database. Additionally, the Web-based Google Scholar, the Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Oklahoma educational websites were used. To carry out searches, I used different combinations of key words and phrases. Descriptors included *bilingual education, second language education, English language learners, English as a second language, English programs and tertiary education, English-medium instruction or universities, English-medium instruction and higher studies, learning strategies, and instructional strategies for English-medium universities.*

The review of the literature was dictated by the genre of project that was designed in this study. In the project, I identified some needs as evidenced by the participants in the study, analyzed them, and then offered some recommendations in order to improve the learning experience of French speaking students at IUGB. Ultimately, I sought to achieve a cultural change culminating into student improved learning. The review of the literature began with the nature of the project genre and continued with the conceptual framework. It expanded to key studies in the areas of program improvement, literacy acquisition, fluency, and proficiency development for ELLs. In short, the review of the literature addressed the project genre and then highlighted proven instructional strategies that instructors could use in their classrooms on a daily basis in order to facilitate French students' language acquisition.

Nature and Rationale of Genre of the Project

The primary goal of the project is to seek change. The change is characterized by a number of new ideas and measures aiming at improving French speaking literacy skills. This stance depicts a position relative to the literacy program at IUGB. This position resulted from analyzing the findings which led to making recommendations. In other words, the project advocates a program improvement focusing on teaching and learning with a strong appeal to administrative support. This genre also takes into account the sociocultural fabric shaping the mind of a significant number of faculty members at IUGB. Because faculty's egos are critically important in this environment, adopting an empirical approach (program improvement) that recognizes instructors' experiences and

gives them options (Yates & Lepene, 2015) seemed to be the best way to deliver the project, which was framed by two guiding theories.

Guiding Theories

The project was framed by two main theoretical perspectives. Foundationally, this project was first guided by the diffusion of innovations by Rogers (1995). Rogers distinguished four main elements in the diffusion of innovations as follows:

1. Innovation: This is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new.
2. Communication channels: This is the means through which messages travel from on individual to another, from one group to another.
3. Time: Time is involved in the diffusion process.
4. Social system: A set of interrelated units engaged into common problem solving for the same goal (p. 10).

Rogers first outlined his theory in 1962. He subsequently revised it in several editions and produced a fifth edition in 2003. Rogers (1995) defined diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated to members of a social system over time (p. 6). He insisted that diffusion implies a special type of communication in that it is concerned with new ideas. The new ideas therefore confer an altering character to the diffusion which then becomes a kind of social change agent. Rogers contended that the social change is the process by which alterations occur in the structure and function of a social system. For instance, when ideas are invented, disseminated, adopted or rejected, the end process creates social changes. Rogers also distinguished five stages to the "innovation-decision

process" (p. 162). However, the elements of diffusion are more relevant to the content of this project.

Diffusion of innovations informs my project in unique ways. First, the project is bringing new ideas, new strategies, and practices to IUGB. This fulfils the innovation element of Rogers's theory. Next, IUGB has been identified since the beginning of this study as the social system. Then, stakeholders in charge of implementing and enforcing the project constitute the channels through which the communication will be delivered. Finally, time is needed to not only implement the project, but also to evaluate and make adjustments as needed throughout the entire implementation phase of the recommendations. Thus, the four elements of Rogers's diffusion of innovations offer a pertinent foundation for the project.

The second theory guiding the development of the project was Deming's (2000) model of continuous improvement, as it appeared to capture best the improvement vision of the project. Deming's theory (2000) is not only pragmatic, but it also comes with a constant evaluative component that is at the core of the project. Although based on Japanese industry in the post-World War II era, Deming's (2000) model of continuous improvement has been revised, critiqued, and adapted to education to inform all types of reforms (Evans, Thornton & Usinger, 2012; Kelemen, 2003) since its first release in 1982. Deming's theory is articulated by 14 points

1. Create constancy and purpose toward improvement,
2. Adopt a new philosophy
3. Atop dependence on inspection,

4. Stop the practice of awarding business on the basis of price,
5. Improve the system of production and service,
6. Institute training on the job,
7. Institute leadership,
8. Root out fear,
9. Break down barriers between departments,
10. Eliminate slogans and targets for production,
11. Eliminate quotas and management by objectives,
12. Remove barriers to pride in workmanship,
13. Institute a program of education,
14. Include everyone in the transformation of the organization (p. 14).

As informative as these 14 strategies are, Deming's guiding concept for change provides more focus and vision to the content of the project. Deming recommended an improvement cycle referred to as "plan-do-study-act" (as cited in Evans et al., 2012). In this cycle, Deming posited that change is expected and planned by all stakeholders following a developed strategy (plan). Change cannot be random. Then, change will be enacted in a controlled setting (do). Once the change has been implemented, it must be observed. Data from its effects must be collected and analyzed (study). Finally, the change will either be improved or institutionalized (act). As such, the essence of Deming's guiding concept is data to implement and improve change.

The “plan-do-study-act” is relevant to the implementation of the project in that it is currently in the planning phase, following the data collection and analysis, phasing into the change to come. Contacting the stakeholders at IUGB, getting their consent and commitment to implementing the recommendations of the project will constitute the “do” phase. Then, the project will be monitored through observations as more data will be collected to be examined for progress. This checkpoint will correspond to the “study” phase. Finally, depending on whether the implementation is successful or not, the change will be institutionalized or tweaked for improvement. Here too, the collection and analysis of data are essential to produce a positive outcome.

Educational Program Improvement

Program improvements do not happen in a vacuum. Effective program improvements must follow strict guidelines as different and necessary steps must be taken in order to reach the expected outcomes. Yates and Lepene (2015) detailed some of these requirements in a study that they carried out. They concluded that for improvement to happen, choices must be offered to faculty to share their experience and expertise. Moreover, feedback from faculty should be solicited so as to design a development tailored to individual needs and motivates the individual receiving the training. In short, by valuing the individuals, one could end up getting the best of them.

Obstacles may exist that prevent the implementation of a program from happening. Frye and Hemmer (2012) recommended identifying and lifting off barriers. Barriers can be in the form of human resistance from faculty or unclear or too broad goals for instance. Frye and Hemmer also observed that data documentation and review in the

forms of survey or interview must accompany the process in order to meet the outcomes. Thessin (2015) went further as she distinguished four key components for a program improvement. They are:

1. Identify a clear instructional focus
2. Lead a school wide improvement process that facilitates on-going learning
3. Collect and analyze multiple types of evidence
4. Build a strong team to lead the work of improvement in professional communities

In summarizing her approach, Thessin (2015) joined Deming's theory of plan-do-study-act.

More indicators of educational program improvement have been suggested that take into account best practices. In a study of a training program for fifth grade teachers, Plecki, Elfers, and Nakamura (2012) pointed out that candidates for such program needed to demonstrate first and foremost knowledge of content. They insisted that a performance assessment needed to take place for the program to be effective. Additionally, in a study encompassing 30 OECD countries, Schleicher (2011) found that good teacher-student relation, good teacher morale, and high performance expectations were all contributing factors to school improvement. These findings were echoed by Huber and Conway (2015) in a study where they concluded that that the higher quality the school improvement plan was, the higher improvement was observed throughout the school. One reason was that goals were clear, specific, measurable and attainable (Caffarella, 2002; Hall, DiPiro, Rowen, & McNair, 2013).

The main lesson from this brief review is that any educational program improvement requires systematical steps in order to be effective. As seen in the afore mentioned studies, a planning must precede the actual implementation. In the course of the implementation, data must be collected, analyzed, and then acted upon to meet any or all outcomes. If such rigorous system is not put in place, then the expected goals could be hypothetical. After establishing the genre with which the project will be disseminated, the next obvious step will be to design the content of such program. That step is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Instructional Resources

In the first review of the literature, I pointed out the many challenges that ELLs faced in their quest of academic literacy in all areas of language acquisition: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In that section, I also highlighted the perceptions of instructors as they related to ELLs' challenges in the classrooms. After conducting observations, individual interviews, and focus group discussions at IUGB, one conclusion I able to draw was that the findings reported in section 2 supported the discussions in the first review of the literature. What was clearly noticeable was that all the participants expressed the wish to see something done or implemented to improve the learning experience of French speaking students at IUGB. As pointed out earlier, the findings also showed that although individual instructors were working to help their students, there were no collective or concerted efforts to use proven instructional strategies to improve their students' academic language acquisition. However they all shared the same

students. Therefore, there is a need for research based solutions. Such is the focal point for the next part of the review of the literature.

The absence of collaboration and uniformity in the use of instructional strategies constitutes a void that will now be filled by the current project. I seek to make a number of recommendations including key instructional strategies that instructors can use year after year. Because of its nature, a professional development session cannot suffice to deliver the content of the project. Individual implementation rooted in professionalism, autonomy, and strong ethics are the foundation for this project (Dufour & Mattos, 2013), as it relies on instructors' desires to help their students achieve at a higher level. Next, observations, collaborations, surveys and evaluations will be well indicated to assess how well the strategies are working (Deming, 2000; Evans, Thornton & Usinger, 2012; Gerstner & Finney, 2013; Kelemen, 2003). Because instructional resources come under different types and formats, they are examined next, regardless of whether they fall under listening, speaking, reading or writing.

Instructional Collaboration

One of the primary and readily available resources comes under the form of collaboration among instructors. Collaboration can be a powerful instructional tool when used appropriately. According to Dufour and Mattos (2013), when instructors collaborate with one another and with the administration, student achievement can grow so far as it can serve as a platform where goals are set and reviewed periodically. Collaboration implies exchanging ideas, discussing and reviewing old or new strategies in a consistent and continuous fashion as suggested by Guzman-Acuna and Martinez-Arcos (2015). In

this process, Guglielmino and Toffler (2014) caution that ideas and goals must be clear, measurable and timed in order to be assessed for progress. Such is the aim of the current project.

In a case study research, Owen (2014) reported that instructors highly rated collaboration among colleagues out of several other strategies. Owen (2014) also stated that the participants became more innovative at planning their lessons, better at analyzing student data and more reflexive on their practices as a result of collaborating among colleagues. The lesson from this case study is that when they start collaborating, all the instructors with French speaking students at IUGB will improve their pedagogy and therefore, they will be more effective in helping their students. A number of instructors share the same students, especially at the preparatory program level. It is clear that they are all faced with the same issues. Collaborating to resolve these issues should not suffer any further delay.

Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies are understood as learning strategies. Learning strategies are the operations used by a learner to achieve the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information (Rigney, 1978). Research in the area indicates that different classifications of learning strategies have been suggested. Rubin (1975) distinguished two groups of strategies: one that directly affects learning and another that indirectly affects learning. Yet Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978) proposed five categories of learning strategies. This study considered a metacognitive, a cognitive, and a socio-affective

grouping as the three main categories of learning strategies (O'malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Kupper, 1985).

Metacognitive strategies are learning strategies that individual students can use (or be taught to use) in order to persevere on a task. They involve thinking about the learning process, planning and monitoring it while it is happening, and self-assess it. As proposed by Vandergrift (2003), the metacognitive strategies are known as the followings:

- Planning and directing attention;
- Monitoring;
- Monitoring, planning, and selective attention;
- Monitoring and problem solving;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Selective attention and monitoring
- Evaluation.

Examples of metacognitive strategies are advance organizers as in previewing the general concept of a learning activity; selective attention as in making a decision in advance to only focus on specific aspect of language input for better retention purposes; or correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar (monitoring and problem solving). This theory was carried out in a study by Rahimirad and Moini (2015). They found that Iranian students in English medium universities had significant challenges in listening (comprehension) to lectures due to their general lack of proficiency in English. To see what strategies would work best, they created a treatment group who was taught the techniques of metacognition as proposed by Vandergrift

(2003). The results showed that there was a significant statistical difference between control and treatment groups. According to the study, applying metacognitive strategies significantly improves lecture (listening) comprehension among Iranian students. Leopold and Leutner (2015) reported similar results in a study of 47 students applying learning strategies in scientific texts. They were divided into three groups: a) the control group, b) a group with one reading strategy, c) a group with who two complete strategies. Leopold and Leutner (2015) reported that group c) made the most gain understanding the scientific text. The commonality between the 47 students, Iranian students and French speaking students at IUGB is that they are all English language learners. As a result of this study, IUGB students could significantly enhance their language acquisition if they are taught the technics of metacognitive strategies.

Learners without metacognitive strategies can resort to cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are more directly related to individual tasks to be accomplished and are linked to a direct manipulation of the learning materials (O'malley et al., 1985). Examples of cognitive strategies are repetition, note taking, use of imagery or keyword to connect new words in the second language with familiar words in the first language. Because language acquisition cannot be separated from vocabulary acquisition, a considerable amount of research has focused on cognitive strategies as they relate to vocabulary learning strategies (Brown & Perry, 1991; Chung, 2012; Oxford, 1986; Rahimirad & Moini, 2015). As evidenced in the findings, French speaking students at IUGB do display challenges in vocabulary acquisition in different disciplines. In this respect, this project is suggesting specific strategies that can be taught to students in order

to facilitate their vocabulary acquisition. For instance, Hayati and Jalilifar (2009) recommend note taking combined with lecture cues to improve listening comprehension skills. Here, note taking is centered on linguistically recognizable cues or words such as *first*, *second*, *the next item*, *the most important thing*, *in conclusion*, etc. Hayati and Jalilifar (2009) conducted a study at an Iranian university involving 60 undergraduate students learning English. The study focused on a listening comprehension text. Out of the participants, 20 were taught note taking strategies; 20 were encouraged to take notes but they were left with no particular instructions; and 20 did not take notes at all. The results showed that students who were taught note taking techniques score significantly higher on their listening comprehension test than all the other students. The implication from this study is that when ELLs are equipped with reading comprehension strategies they perform better. As a result, if note taking strategies are combined with other cognitive strategies, one can clearly see how significantly French speaking students at IUGB could improve their language learning.

The last grouping of learning strategies is found in socio-affective strategies. These learning strategies relate to the manner in which some students access new information. The social interactions among students, based on equal partnerships, are a powerful way for students to improve their academic skills and knowledge as evidence in cooperative learning (Alghamdi, 2014; Dansereau, 1988). Group discussions and cooperative learning as suggested by Millis (2012) can be implemented with small groups where members hold responsibilities and where the facilitator (or instructor) ensures that all learners are involved. This strategy has the ability to provide cognitive and affective

learning as the learners engage in discussions about the given topic (Galbraith & Fouch, 2007; Ning & Hornby, 2014). In this small environment, the learner feels relatively safe to try new ideas or concepts without any risks of embarrassment (Ning, 2013). Consequently, the learner commits to "participatory learning" (Galbraith, 2004, p. 212) by way of sharing his/her insights with the class.

Under the umbrella of cooperative learning, the literature on language acquisition identifies different types of grouping methods that allow instruction to meet students at the current level of performance. As reported in the findings, some instructors are already using some type of grouping. A few are highlighted below that instructors at IUGB can use in their instructional planning.

- Flexible grouping: this grouping is dynamic and it is determined by the student's ability level (Conklin, 2010). Flexible grouping is especially beneficial to struggling students because they are not always in the same (low performing) groups and can avoid being stigmatized. Flexible grouping has also proven to keep students' interests up as they are allowed to move around class and interact with different partners thereby changing routine (Conklin, 2010).
- Heterogeneous grouping: this grouping includes students with various academic achievement levels. With different abilities and interests, this grouping is diverse and is more reflexive of the real world (Gregory & Chapman, 2012). So, students learn to support one another provided the ability gap is not too wide among students (Conklin, 2010; Martinez, Harris, & McClain, 2014). Instructors need to

ensure that clear learning targets have been identified and that the groups have been properly structured to avoid far great ability levels among students.

- Homogeneous grouping: This grouping assembles the students with the same ability level. One implication with this grouping is that a marginal group of students will be performing at a higher level whereas another group of students might be lagging behind. Because of the controversy of this grouping linked to its ineffectiveness at times, even though it could be productive for certain tasks (Gregory & Burkman, 2011) instructors at IUGB may decide to use their own judgement. The preoccupation is not to suggest strategies whose effectiveness could be controversial or conflictive. Rather, the motivation is to propose proven ways to help instructors at IUGB improve student learning in their classrooms. They will be better served as potential issues are minimized as much as possible.
- Flexogeneous grouping: this type of grouping encompasses the heterogeneous and the homogeneous groupings. It is a careful, harmonious, and flexible grouping of those two types of groupings leading to a sort of jigsaw learning strategy (Conklin, 2010; Martinez et al., 2014). With this grouping, selected students start working with one group and end up with another one, as they learn from different peers with different ability levels. This grouping demands careful planning and structure in order to maximize learning.

Looking back over these social-mediating learning strategies, it appears they all lead to a common denomination. That is differentiation. Throughout all the groupings, instructors should pursue individual student learning. So long as instruction is tailored to

meet all students' needs, differentiation is then achieved (Hack, 2013). In fact, the underlying aim of all the learning strategies is to allow all students to access the curriculum based on how they learn (Gardner, 2011). When instructors at IUGB are able to continually carry out differentiation, then French speaking students will be well served.

Support Programs and Policy Change

French speaking students at IUGB faced significant challenges in language proficiency as revealed by the findings. These challenges were more profound for freshly admitted students. One way to help these students is to screen them in order to identify the ones at risk, so as to tailor interventions to support them throughout their transition in the language program (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010). IUGB already allowed proficient students to test out and start their college courses following admission. However, the remaining students were all enrolled in the same courses without a clear systematic identification of ability levels. Glew, Dixon, Shannon, and Salamonson, (2015) proposed three levels. Level 1: students are proficient in English. These students would be allowed to test out as is the current policy. Level 2: students are borderline proficient. Finally, level 3 are students are risk. They are true beginners in English. Knowing which students need support in the early days of their tertiary education enables instructors to provide students with the adequate intervention. As for the criteria and the instruments of selection, instructors along with administrators can convene and make the necessary decisions.

Glew et al. (2015) reported that a number of universities in Australia are using this screening concept with much success. They documented in a study how level 3

students who engaged in the support program were able to score just as well as students of level 1. The intervention program is rooted in sound learning strategies such as scaffolding of instruction to keep students engaged. Support initiatives included but not limited to communication workshops, tutoring, individual counseling and other methods of re-teaching instructional materials. Finally, students are given a resource booklet that includes a survival kit as well as models of writing and activities designed to meet standards in academic communication (speaking and listening). As a result of this study, it became easy to suggest that if implemented, the concept of screening students supported by interventions would be beneficial to French speaking students at IUGB.

More support to improve students' proficiency in English could be achieved in immersion programs. The overwhelming majority of the participants in this study already suggested this approach to help their students. Two viable options could be explored to carry out this language immersion. First, students could engage in a language experience with native speakers. This would be a cultural and linguistic experience in a neighboring English speaking country (or any Anglo-Saxon country) where French speaking students would have the opportunity to experiment the language first-hand (Kibler, Salerno, & Hardigree, 2013; Morrison 2002). This option has the advantage of making students use the language of study at all times as they discover the intricacies of the language and the culture that vehicles it (Gundermann, 2014). Because cost is involved, administration and college leaders would have to determine the appropriate time frame so as to avoid a financial burden on students. Additionally, the success of such endeavor can be compromised if students do not buy into it precisely because of excessive costs.

The second option of immersion consists in recruiting more students who are English speakers already. The student body at IUGB already showed that English speaking students represented the minority students (IUGB, 2012). A conscious effort would have to be made in order to recruit more of them in order to achieve an almost total English immersion. If and when this new student body becomes significant, it would then impact the overall culture on campus where even casual conversations among students might be in English or at least, English would be more prevalent. This point would then mark the true beginning of a new learning experience at IUGB. This immersion option can be implemented much faster and a lot easier since costs are significantly minimized.

The final policy change, yet perhaps the most challenging, appears to be the recruitment of instructors with mastery command of the language of instruction (Byun et al., 2010). It is well documented that instructors have a direct impact on student achievement (Brookfield, 2010; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Vahdani, Sabouri, & Ghafarnian, 2015; Xu, 2015). Yet at least one participant revealed in the findings that he was able to communicate effectively only when he wrote on the board. In essence, because of his own struggles in oral proficiency in English, he resorted to written communication. This is congruent with the findings of a study conducted by Byun et al., (2010) at a Korean university with English-medium instruction. They found that instructors were overwhelmed as they had to overplan to cover language issues. Also, they found that students complained about their instructors' limited English proficiency. Classes stalled from time to time resulting in instructors not able to cover the curriculum.

Instructors of English-medium universities play a key role as further demonstrated by Studer (2015) in a study, where students tended to blame teaching failures on teachers' lack of linguistic competence in English. This issue of linguistic competence became sizeable in the IUGB context because students came in contact with English only in class. Consequently, the instructor became a critical resource and source of learning. Therefore, it was urgent that faculty at IUGB be proficient in English, even when they were experts in their fields.

Conclusion

This literature review summarizes the different elements necessary for an instructional culture change at IUGB. These elements stemming from the findings of the current study make the case of the essence of the project. As seen in the review, all four legs of language acquisition, reading, writing, listening, and speaking use a complex intertwined combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategies (Rahimirad & Moini, 2015). If these strategies are combined with a support program, then ELLs' proficiency will be enhanced to a greater degree of success (Gundermann, 2014).

As discussed earlier, the project to be delivered is a set of recommendations for educational program improvement. This genre could not be more appropriate since the current study seeks precisely to introduce a new vision, resulting in a culture change at IUGB as expressed by the participants in the study. Proceeding this way presents some strengths but some limitations as well. The description of the project, its implications, and reflections are discussed and offered in the next sections.

Project Description

In its final format, the project is a recommendation for educational program improvement focusing on creating a new instructional and administrative paradigm. The first part of the project highlights the findings of the study. The findings are organized under themes that summarize the challenges of French speaking students (first five themes) and instructors' responses to dealing with those issues along with their proposals to administrative authorities (last two themes). The second part comprises of a) instructional strategies; b) administrative policy change; and c) an assessment and monitoring component to help ensure the expected outcomes do happen. The suggestions encompass a series of proven instructional strategies that instructors could use at will based on the performance level of their students. Next, ideas on possible endeavors the administration can undertake are also offered in order to provide means and support to the instructional efforts that will be carried out. In essence, the recommendations of the project address the "how to" help French speaking students in the classrooms as well as outside. The rationale for this stance is that there should be some accompanying measures to the instructional strategies to be most effective. After all, students just do not stay in the classrooms.

As designed, the project relies on the educators as primary stakeholders since they are in charge of instructing students on a daily basis. The administrative authorities are next in line as they have their roles to play in supporting any and all educational initiatives. Finally, students cannot be ignored, even though they are seen in a more passive role because they are receiving a new (educational) treatment.

Existing Supports

Since the foundation of IUGB in 1998, to the first "home" graduating class in 2015, there has never been a study like this one that addresses the issues faced by French speaking students at IUGB. This project turned out to be the first of its kind. As a pioneer in addressing one of the main challenges faced by French speaking students at IUGB, this project has generated both curiosity and excitement. The reason for this curiosity is because first, some faculty members wanted to know why a doctoral student would leave the US to conduct a study in Cote d'Ivoire. Next, what purpose was I trying to serve? Once they found out that I am a native of Cote d'Ivoire, and that I was aiming at suggesting ways to help French speaking students in their quest of academic literacy, administrators and faculty members alike became very supportive and encouraging. For instance, I received such a good response to the focus group discussions that I had to politely turn down a few faculty members. Furthermore, a few faculty members candidly recalled their doctoral journeys here in the US or in Canada as they wandered when I planned to publish my final study. Some wanted to be the first to get a copy of my project. Others inquired if I was willing to conduct a professional development to present my recommendations. The Chief Academic Officer made it clear to me, during a farewell that lasted over half an hour in his office, that my study is critical to the services that they providing to their students. He insisted to read my recommendations as soon as they ready. Finally, support came from unexpected people like office clerks, administrative assistants who not only offered me their best wishes but also asked me to consider

coming back to work as an instructor and share my experience with French speaking students at IUGB.

Potential Barriers to Implementation

One barrier is whether faculty members and administrators alike will actually take the time to read and become familiar with all the content of the project. Beyond this step, another barrier is if, when, and how the administration will carry out any policy changes. Further, faculty members are not accountable for applying any of the suggested strategies, nor are they going to be assessed on those strategies. In short, no one is contractually tied to the implementation of the project. In fact, the nature of the project is such that it is rid of any coercive measures. As a result, the stakeholders may decide to apply or ignore its content.

Potential Solutions to Barriers of Implementation

Although the barriers may seem daunting, I have reasons to believe that the project will be read and considered by all stakeholders. The first reason is because it addresses real problems that students experience throughout IUGB. Next, faculty members, who are at the forefront of this project, are professionals and care about their craft. Therefore, they do want to be successful and want their students to be successful as well. To this end, it is hard to imagine they would ignore any strategy or suggestion that can help their students achieve at a higher level. No one instructor would want to be seen as the obstacle to any improvement. In fact, each faculty member who was interviewed has already shared their concern with me by suggesting their own solutions to dealing with French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy at IUGB. Finally, with

faculty buying in, the administration will have to implement its share as it might not run the moral risk of denying support to either students or instructors.

Project Implementation

The implementation of this project depends on the consent and good will of both the administration and faculty members. However, I plan to tap into the warmth and enthusiasm that I witnessed throughout my interactions with all stakeholders on campus. A few basic steps will be taken as I seek consent for implementation of the project. First, I will meet with the Chief Academic officer of IUGB to present him the summary of the findings and recommendations in the study. I will make sure he receives a copy of the project, which he has already requested. He will also be asked to commit to calling or attending a faculty meeting where the project will be presented to the whole faculty. He will be invited to lay out a reasonable time frame as to when the first recommendations will be implemented. One reason is the implementation process need not be done by chance. It must follow a method to yield the expected results. Another reason is because I plan to keep up with the process either by email or by physically being present if at all possible. One benefit for proceeding this way is to obtain an immediate feedback and be able to suggest some adjustments if need be. Being able to monitor the process is key to avoid any derailment.

Next, I will hold a similar meeting with all the participants at a time and place that is convenient to all. A copy of the project will be given to each of them. After a brief presentation of the project followed by questions they may have, they will be asked to indicate firmly when they plan to begin the implementation process. They will be

informed about the effective support from the chief academic officer's office. They will be asked for their voiced support during the faculty meeting where the project will be presented to the entire faculty body. Having instructors buying into the project represents a powerful constituency for the implementation process.

The third step will consist in arranging or attending a faculty meeting where the project will officially be presented to the whole faculty. At that meeting, instructors will be encouraged to implement the content of the project. It will be made clear by the Chief Academic Officer when, who, and how specific recommendations will begin to be implemented. This will be the right time the participants in the study to speak up since they constitute a powerful voice in the implementation process.

Once all parties, administration and faculty have consented and agreed to holding the meeting, I will conduct a brief PowerPoint presentation that may last 30 to 45 minutes. The format will be as follows:

- Intervention of the Chief Academic Officer
    a) Official seal of approval and support
    b) Implementation timetable
- Slide presentation
    a) Findings of the study
    b) Setting expectations for French speaking students
    c) Fostering a cultural change
    d) Role and responsibilities
- Questions and answers

This meeting will be held at the beginning of a new academic year in the fall. The idea is to try the new strategies at the start of a new year as opposed to sometime in the course of the year, monitor any progress, and avoid appearing as an intruder.

Roles and Responsibilities

Among the stakeholders identified earlier, the students have no role in the implementation of the recommendations because they are being serviced. Therefore, authorities in the administration and faculty members bear the responsibility to carry out the recommendations in the projects. Because freshmen experience the most challenges in academic literacy as revealed in the findings, faculty members and department heads in the University Preparatory Program (UPP) will be at the forefront of the implementation process. Active and genuine engagement and belief in the new ideas will eventually result in French speaking student "self-actualization" as described by Maslow (1943). Finally, as an expert, I will maintain a constant presence by phone, email, or physical presence if possible for monitoring purposes and to show care and concern for my project. After all, if I am the designer of this project, my best leadership will be to stay involved and push for results.

Project Evaluation Plan

The meeting with administrative authorities and faculty members intends to make them become familiar with the content of the project and make them the enforcers of the new ideas. Once all parties have agreed on a starting point, informal formative evaluations will be performed to collect immediate feedback during the first few days. Brief observations will be performed coupled with questions and answers. The purpose is

to ensure that the implementation is going into the right direction and following the expected steps. Also, informal evaluations have the benefit of providing a higher probability for the participants to share in their true thoughts about the project, given their non-structured character (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 123). Also, Caffarella (2002) contended that in order for any changes to occur after a project has been carried out, informal (formative evaluation during the implementation) and formal evaluations (summative at the end of the implementation) must take place. So, formal summative evaluations will also be conducted at the end of each semester for a total of three semesters, fall, spring, and summer making up the academic year. The summative evaluations will offer the times for formal assessments where extensive data will be collected from various sources and examined. The goal is to measure two things: What recommendations are being implemented and how much gain if any is being seen. Because the overall goal of the project is to suggest new ideas in order to improve French speaking students' academic literacy, it is fair to measure how the different strategies are being implemented and what results are being achieved.

The key stakeholders upon whom the implementation rests are the administrative authorities for what regards policy changes. These stakeholders include the President of IUGB, the Vice-President of Operations, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Deans of the three schools at IUGB. As for the instructional aspect, faculty members in general and UPP instructors in particular, remain the primary enforcers of the content of the project. Department Heads will have to assume leadership and urge their fellow instructors to be committed to fostering a new culture as a result of the implementation of new ideas.

Project Implications

The implications for possible social changes can be far reaching if the project is implemented properly. The need for change is evident as voiced by the participants in this study. The project addresses precisely those needs and aims at creating a positive change in French speaking students' learning at IUGB. Currently, French speaking students are finding ways to succeed regardless of the language barrier. With the implementation of the project, students' achievement could improve dramatically. As a result of the implementation of the project, the hybrid French-English culture on campus could be relegated to the past, for a culture conducive to more fluency and higher proficiency in the instructional language for French speaking students.

Implications for Stakeholders and Larger Community

Although they were not interviewed in this study, administrative authorities are well aware of French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy, as I was able to find out throughout my informal interactions with them. Possible implications for social change for these stakeholders include an opportunity to push for a new culture rooted in more effective policies that support and encourage French speaking students at IUGB. Also, the implementation of the project puts them in a unique position to afford French speaking students with the ways and means to interact more with the wider English speaking world in the instructional language.

Next are faculty members who play a strategic and prominent role in the enforcement of the project. If some of the participants directly called on the administration for tangible solutions, others expressed what they would like to see

happen to the curriculum in order to remedy French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy. Possible implications for an overall student success include a) a renewed commitment to student achievement articulated around a rigorous application of new ideas from the project; b) an increased role and sense of ownership in the learning process and lives of French speaking students; c) a heightened responsibility to fostering a new culture on campus beginning with every course they teach. The implications resulting from the implementation of this project can produce extremely positive learning changes throughout IUGB for all students in general, but it is especially so for French speaking students who are the primary beneficiaries.

As stakeholders, students find themselves at the receiving end of the project. They are being serviced so they have no control over what is being delivered to them. In fact, their needs are the raison d'etre for this project. However, a positive and active application of what is being asked of them will undoubtedly result in the expected outcome. The implication for these stakeholders is an increased learning as mentioned before. As a result, students could be better prepared for the market place at graduation.

To the larger community, research shows that state officials and policy makers believe that higher learning attainment turns into higher skilled workers (Minnis, 2006, p. 120). It is understandable that if universities are the places for higher learning, where science and technology come together, then they should be able to produce higher skilled students. According to a UNESCO (2009) report, African universities have historically and still continue to be the center for training and knowledge dissemination (p. 80). Therefore, with higher educational training, higher skilled graduates ready for the

national employment market were expected. A consistent application of the project helps in this direction.

Conclusion

The findings in this study unveil some of the true challenges for French speaking students in their quest to full proficiency in the instructional language at IUGB. Because of the language barrier, their general progress in other subjects is significantly slowed as indicated by the participants in this study. Identifying this problem, its occurrence, how significant it is, is what the project study set out to do. But stopping there would cause this research to be sterile. Suggestions backed by sound research are offered to first equip instructors with new ideas and new instructional strategies in order to achieve a new culture more supportive of student proficiency in and out of the classroom. Since instructors have a unique role as knowledge facilitators (Brookfield, 2010), the project stresses their responsibilities as primary enforcers of the recommendations. Suggestions are also made to the administrative authorities since they are responsible for policy making and for providing support and means to teaching and learning. The project recognizes their roles as all stakeholders must collaborate to improve French speaking students' learning at IUGB.

As designed, if implemented properly and thoroughly, the implications of this project can be greatly positive. Currently, faculty members are teaching and students are learning despite their challenges. Giving administrators new ideas, equipping instructors with proven instructional strategies, and encourage them to collaborate and reflect on their craft is a clear direction into implementing best practices, which leads to

professional growth. As a result, student learning will be positively impacted as demonstrated by Mezirow (1997) in his transformative teaching. In the end, graduate students could be better prepared as IUGB slowly builds a new and improved image in the region as a credible tertiary institution. So, by combining the findings and analysis of the interviews, research and recommendations, this project demonstrates its importance and pertinence to research at IUGB and in the region. In fact, Section 4 will offer me the platform to detail further this project and allow me to frame my reflections and recommendations for more research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this study, I set out to uncover the challenges of French speaking students at IUGB and make recommendations for instructional strategies and policy change in order to improve students' academic literacy. In Section 3, the essence of the recommendations was proposed based on the findings. In this Section, the strengths and limitations of the project are discussed. I also reflect on what I learned about scholarship and leadership for change to finally close with my suggestions for future research as a result of this study.

Project Strengths

This project has several strengths. The first strength is found in the void that it fills. For the first time in the history of IUGB, faculty members will have a document encompassing sound suggestions rooted in research that they can use to help their students. As an educator, having such resource that one can manipulate at will is invaluable. In addition, because the remedies addressing the issues are brand new, they are expected by faculty members and administrators alike with a sense of curiosity and relative impatience, offering thereby an unsurpassed importance to the project.

Second, the project offers an opportunity for collaboration, participation, and reflection on the expected changes. By making the recommendations, the project leaves room to individual input and design, ultimately putting the instructors in charge of the implementation process as no one knows their students better than them. The collaborative aspect of the project is key because it brings instructors together as they compare data, brainstorm together, reflect, and find new and improved ways to help their

students (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). Here too, by suggesting the cycle instructor-collaboration-instructor for an effective management of the instructional data and resulting data, the project holds a unique importance.

Finally, this project is strong in that it addresses all six themes of the findings. As such, the project is a logical end of the whole study. The supporting references that come from a wide array of sources all point to the absolute usefulness of such project. As the project digs through the literature in order to make relevant recommendations, it exposes its potential consumers, faculty and university leadership alike to similar educational contexts, taking away the possible anxiety associated with being in a difficult situation all alone. In short, the project delivered is a methodical and rational answer to the academic challenges faced by French speaking students at IUGB. Therefore, it is hard to question its importance.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The empirical aspect of the problem being addressed in this project makes it hard for me to claim that there is no other solution outside mine. A look at the history of knowing and learning is very humbling to this effect (Merriam et al., 2007). One alternative approach is a professional development session. This would consist of a training session for instructors over several days on instructional strategies they would use to improve their students' learning. Professional development offers a key approach in that it seeks to rectify ineffective practices, enhance individual learning and performance, and lays the grounds for change (Blandford, 2012). However, for such change to be implemented, significant challenges would need to be resolved. First, I

would need to convince very experienced instructors who are experts in their fields, without crushing their ego, to sit in a training class for several days, conducted by a freshly graduated doctoral student. Next, I would have to consider schedule constraints for so many instructors if I want a minimum of faculty members to attend the training. Last, assuming the training takes place, I would still have to hope that the attendees would implement what they would have learned.

Another approach consists of addressing the problem via a curriculum plan. Since one of the goals of this project is to introduce a new way of addressing French speaking students' needs at IUGB, a new curriculum plan seems appropriate to vehicle the new vision. However, I consider this genre to be somewhat too ambitious as it would cause an overhaul change of the instructional operation of the university. Besides, a change of this scope and nature tends to meet resistance since it is not warranted from inside (Kotter, 1999). Additionally, the evaluation of such plan would be long and tedious risking more stress than relief. In the end, whatever the project genre, the likelihood of its implementation rests on the extent to which the researcher is willing to push it but also how much the consumer or target audience is willing to try it.

Scholarship

In offering my reflection about scholarship, one question immediately came to mind. What exactly is scholarship? According to Byram and Feng (2004), scholarship is the process of advocating what ought to be, sometimes attempting to implement and assess what ought to be, with a constant focus on future developments and why. Based on this definition, I can recall learning many different concepts among which I will highlight

a few key items. The first major concept that I learned is without contest, the Manual of the American Psychological Association. I can recall that it appeared extremely intimidating, scary and represented a daunting task to take on. It was especially so because suddenly, I had to start writing in a different fashion subsequent to my Masters degree, for the first time in my life. From then on, I was to write following the guidelines of the Manual of the American Psychological Association.

I also learned to find relevant peer-reviewed research articles for my study. Finding relevant articles was already challenging, let alone peer-reviewed research articles. Along with the search process came the reading and patience aspect of scholarship. Not only did I learn to read differently, I also learned to be patient as I dug through numerous research articles. To this effect, the teachings of the first residency that I attended in Atlanta came full circle. While I was galvanized listening to the testimonies of the new Ed. D. graduates, I was also reminded that each of us has his or her own path, trials and tribulations as so well painted by Daloz (2012). Patience also came in the form of writing, reviewing, and re-writing. I came to realize that what was good to me was not for my chair or the second committee member, or vice-versa. As a result, I learned to advocate more for my views as I backed them up with evidence. The reason is that I could not dwell in frustration if I were to complete my study.

The final major concept that I learned was the components of a research study. While some of the concepts (introduction, conclusion, research problem and questions) were relatively easy to me, others like data collection and analysis were more difficult to grasp. The whole learning process became challenging at times because of the online

distance aspect. There was no one nearby with whom I could briefly discuss an idea or a thought. When I faced with a problem, I had to send an email asking about it. I simply had to adjust and adapt to this new way of learning as I learned to rely on emails and telephone calls at times. As I looked back, being a scholar also means being able to use the appropriate resources and means to document what ought to happen. Such has been part of my scholarship.

Project Development

The current project is the culmination of much learning that I completed both online and traditionally, in seminars as well as in research trips. It is also the fruit of a synthesis of numerous resources and countless of sleepless nights all fueled by the excitement of finally becoming a Doctor in Education. What an accomplishment! Developing this project has made me an expert without pretention whatsoever, as I have become acutely aware of learning strategies to help ELLs. The many theories coupled with the multitudes of researches testing some of these theories have generated a new and more knowledgeable educator than I was a few years ago. For instance, without opening a single book, I can talk about metacognitive learning or cognitive learning in terms that can be understood by any educator.

Designing the current project has re-enforced in me the notion that what matters is meeting students' learning needs. The idea is not mine alone as it has traveled from Dewey (1911) to Gardner (2011) to novice researcher such as myself. However, I have come to realize that tertiary students are just as needy as all other students. Making the curriculum accessible to them according to how they learn has everything to do with

making students successful through improved ways of learning (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). This is what ought to be. Now that I am this aware of what ought to be and since I am a practitioner, I now see myself joining the distinguished voices of scholars in advocating future developments through the project study.

Leadership and Change

The exercise of leadership implies that there are leaders. Leaders are change agents as they are responsible for change strategies, implementation and monitoring (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009). The day I made the decision to start this doctoral journey can amount to a leadership step, since it was de facto a change in personal vision. In order to develop the current project, I researched and learned key strategies that would work for my audience, putting myself in the position to introduce and monitor change at IUGB. Clearly, leadership, like respect, is earned and not given. Being a leader comes with a certain knowledge or expertise of some sort and strong convictions that one can share with others. Mine are rooted in my project study that I am now in the process of sharing with faculty and administrators at IUGB as I seek change.

Change will focus on learning strategies for French speaking students at IUGB. Based on the research that I have completed, it appears that change is far from being swift. Rather, it can be long and challenging as some members of the group may not buy into the project (Kelemen, 2003). However, so long as educators and practitioners are engaged in a transfer of knowledge, social change will be stimulated. Additionally, as the learner is transformed and empowered by the new knowledge, the condition maybe met for him or her to act on his environment (Freire, 2000). Even if change is not as radical as

Freire's (2000), change will still happen as long as leaders are exercising their roles. Thus, to the extent where I am joining my voice with other scholars, I am exercising leadership for change.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

As a practitioner, I could not agree more with researchers on the importance of reflection. Self-reflection is critical for educators since it allows them to examine their assumptions and shortcomings in order to grow professionally (Mezirow, 1997). As I reflect on this study, I identify its importance at two levels. The first level is personal. The design and elaboration of this project study has propelled me to a new intellectual height. I have learned and implemented new research rules and guidelines. For example, I would quote Wikipedia as scholarly source a few years ago. Today, I am compelled to use other sources such as peer-reviewed articles for reasons of validity and credibility. As a result, I am now equipped with scholarly knowledge allowing me to embark on a journey for change primarily at IUGB in leadership shoes. Because this project is the result of a long journey that has transformed my learning, this work is very important.

The second level is broader and attempts to reach a wider audience. A work of this nature, size and scope has never been done since the inception of IUGB. As demonstrated before in the significance of the problem, the literature focusing on the challenges of French speaking students at IUGB is missing. As seen in the findings, the students' challenges are significant especially for freshmen. As a result of these needs, I have suggested some solutions. Therefore, if implemented, this project could lead to student ground breaking performances. In essence, this study is a valuable resource for

faculty, university leaders as well as policy makers at the state level. Additionally, I was somewhat surprised that an overwhelming majority of the literature on ELLs centered on Spanish speaking students or Asian students. The rest of the students were referred to as "others" or international students. This study is different and singular in that it makes the case of a unique group of students who speak French but are engaging in college study using English. For this reason and the unique resource that it represents for IUGB, the importance of this work is established.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

When interviewed, the participants in this study expressed the need for solutions to meet students' needs. A few openly urged change in order to improve students' learning. The current project has been elaborated in light of that need for change. Faculty and administrators will now have a valuable resource at their disposal to help their students learn in new and improved ways. This has the potential to change their practice for a long time. Students will also be positively impacted as they will be exposed in ways that meet their academic ability, level, and interests possibly propelling them to achieve at a higher level. Then, as an organization, IUGB would truly be fulfilling its mission of being an elite educational institution in the region (IUGB, 2012). When instructors are using best practices in their classrooms (suggested in this project) and students are learning at a higher degree, all supported by sound administrative policies, then social change will result as an outcome. Such is an ambition of this project.

The ambition of the project is one of the reasons why I considered making recommendations. In fact, a careful look at the project makes it clear that I seek a culture

change at IUGB. To be able to achieve this, change will have to be inclusive, gradual, and steady so progress can be assessed and monitored. This belief is rooted in my experience as a practitioner to always solicit the input and opinions of the members of a group, especially when looking to change something. In my experience I have come to realize that people want to be valued. Hence, recognizing their self-worth through their opinions goes a long way. My project allows room for reflection and individual input as well as collaboration to ensure common goals.

Common goals imply that students are the center for this study even though the problem is seen through the eyes of the instructors. Through the classroom observations, individual interviews, and focus group interviews, instructors expressed diverse challenges facing French speaking students at IUGB. As a result, I now know what instructors think about the issues facing French speaking students and what could and should be done to remedy the situation from their standpoint. Future research could look at the problem from the students' perspectives. For example, a research study seeking to unveil "what French speaking students perceive as their challenges in academic literacy" would have the advantage of seeing the problem through the students' eyes. From this perspective, such investigation could provide valuable insights about students' own learning difficulties, as the literature at IUGB expands for the greater good of scholars and policy makers, both in the region and in the wider community.

Conclusion

In Section 4, an in-depth look at the project study was laid out. The essence of the project arose from the different needs and concerns expressed by the participants throughout the individual interviews and focus group discussions, corroborated by the classroom observations that I conducted. I also highlighted several strengths of the project. The main one resides in the project capacity to be an instructional resource for faculty in their role of facilitator of knowledge (Brookfield, 2010). As much as instructors' individual freedoms are recognized in the implementation process, they are also urged to collaborate to check and monitor students' progress. When instructors are using proven learning strategies, working collaboratively assessing, and monitoring students' progress, then the conditions for student success are met (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). As it relates to IUGB, student success should translate in increased proficiency for French speaking students in a new learning culture more supportive of the instructional language.

As important as this study is, I did not seek French speaking students' opinions about their own learning challenges. Therefore, a study that focuses on students' perceptions of their learning difficulties could offer new insights towards reconciling both instructors and students' views, for a complete picture of all the challenges impacting students at IUGB. For the time being, the literature is richer today with this study at IUGB than it was before, as the project offers clear benefits for all stakeholders.

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Appendix A: Project Study

Recommendations for Educational Program Improvement

Introduction

When International University of Grand-Bassam (IUGB) first opened its doors in 2005 in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), it was the result of a partnership between Georgia State University in Georgia, USA and the state of Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa to create a university system based on the American model of higher education (IUGB, 2012). The establishment of the university included using English as the instructional language. Yet, the prospective students in Cote d'Ivoire and the region, with the exception of Liberia and Ghana, are all French speaking students (Sakellariou & Patrinos, 2009). Although English is taught in secondary schools in the region as a second language (Grootaert, 1994), about 40% of students admitted at IUGB show a lack of literacy skills necessary to start their tertiary education in English (Arnould & Dadzie, 2003; IUGB, 2012). Throughout discussions and interviews with the participants in this study, it was revealed that a significant number of French speaking students often lacked the proficiency necessary to meet the demands of academic literacy that higher education places on them. Therefore, academic literacy in English becomes a challenge for French speaking students as they navigate their way throughout the different disciplines at IUGB.

The intent of this two-part project is to suggest proven research based solutions to help improve the academic literacy skills of French speaking students at IUGB. Part 1 highlights the findings of the research study. As a result of these findings, part 2 makes some recommendations centered primarily on instructional strategies that instructors can implement in their classrooms. These strategies include some practical pedagogical technics ready to use at the disposal of instructors. The second part of the

recommendations stresses the role that administrative authorities should play to help with the goal of improving French students' skills in academic literacy. Finally, the project closes with an assessment and monitoring component designed to support the implementation process.

Part I: The Findings of the Research Study

The findings of the research study were classified under seven different themes. The first five findings described issues faced by French speaking students. The last two detailed what the participants in the study were doing to address students' deficiencies (theme 6) and what they hoped to see happen from an administrative standpoint (theme 7). The findings resulted from different classroom observations, individual interviews, and focus group interviews conducted at IUGB.

Theme 1: Listening Comprehension Issues

Issues were seen in listening comprehension as students struggled to make sense of the materials that were presented to them. It was also noted that students' behavior was a factor in the slow level of comprehension. The issues were:

- Problem understanding lectures

Students experienced problems keeping up with lectures because of density of new vocabulary and/or pace of speech.

- Lack of readiness to course level

Some students lacked the level required to be enrolled in some of the classes they were in.

- Lack of familiarity with course subject

The subjects and/or concepts being taught to students were entirely foreign to them at times as those concepts only existed in the dominant culture.

- Failure to prepare for class

Considerable number of students went to class unprepared. Many a time, they failed to read the assigned chapters or failed to complete their homework assignments.

- Failure to engage in voluntary reading and/or practice

A number of students lacked self-motivation to read on their own, although they stayed active on social media.

Theme 2: Speaking Issues

Speaking was a major challenge as revealed in the findings. Students often readily used the first language when they found themselves in uncomfortable expressive situations. Below are the difficulties that were noted.

- Lack of proficiency

Students experienced difficulty sustaining a healthy academic conversation in class.

- Lack of vocabulary

Students paused their conversations looking for words or used a French vocabulary word at times to translate their thoughts.

- Lack of self-confidence

A few students refused to participate in debates either because of lack of self-confidence or because of shyness. Some (very few) were observed making comments in French about extreme difficulty speaking English in front of the class.

- Problems of pronunciation

Correct pronunciation of words remained an issue. One instance where almost all the students experienced the same problem was with the interdental sounds “the” as in ‘theatre” for example. They would read as “featre”. Other issues were seen in the wrong intonation of the word where the accents were placed on the wrong syllable. For example, they would say “partici**pa**te” instead of “**par**ticipate”.

- Failure to read (for class or leisure reading)
- Code switching

Students frequently spoke French in class when in lack of words or simply continued to speak French out of habit or because it was effortless.

Theme 3: Writing Issues

Students also displayed significant challenges in writing. The deficiencies that they exhibited translated into a lack of preparation for college level writing. The following is a summary of these deficiencies.

- Poor college level writing skills

Essays and laboratory reports exposed students’ writing deficiencies seen in sentence construction, grammatical errors, choice of vocabulary words, or poor articulation of body of work.

- Poor reading skills
- Citation problems

Students tended to ignore or completely omitted to cite authors’ ideas not understanding the importance to do so.

- Paraphrasing problems

Students simply cut and pasted portions of texts found online. Often, they did not distinguish between their own ideas and other authors'.

- Plagiarism

The concept of plagiarism was unclear to students. They did not have a full understanding of possible consequences.

- Students continued to think and write in first language then, translated in English

Theme 4: College Career Issues

The findings revealed that students were under-prepared, ill-equipped, and lacked necessary information relative to tertiary education and college level studies and expectations. The issues were:

- Gap between college readiness and college expectations

Faced with the pace, the body of work to be done, and the culture of the new language, students showed significant deficiencies in diverse areas.

- Student exhibited feelings of being overwhelmed and frustration
- Failure to seek adequate advice

Students did not take advantage of advising hours offered by instructors. Often struggling students had to be invited to make appointments for extra-help.

Theme 5: Cultural Conflict

The environmental context where students lived was rooted into a French speaking culture characterized by habits and customs different from the culture being taught by the instructional language. Students were required to speak English in class, but nothing outside the classroom urged them to use it. As a result, students were switching back and forth between French and English. Here is what was revealed:

- Constant socio-cultural clash between Anglo-Saxon culture and local culture

Students lived daily in an entire French speaking culture, and then went to class where they were expected to be proficient in English.

- Inconsistent or weak policy supporting the use of instructional language

It was unclear if there was a policy enforcing the use of English. Although students knew they were required to speak English, nothing deterred them from speaking French.

- Lack of opportunities for fast proficiency in English

Places, instances, or systematic daily opportunities for students to improve their English proficiency were limited around campus.

Theme 6: Participants' Responses to Students' Deficiencies

In light of French speaking students' challenges, some instructors had begun to use some instructional strategies to support their students. The following was shared by the participants in the study.

- Oral and written presentations in class

Students were required to research a specific topic or a concept being studied and write a short presentation following a given guideline. During this time students were expected to take ownership of the class time.

- Class discussions

Students were expected to share their opinions backed by some facts. They could question their peers who would then have defend their ideas.

- Use of technology

Instructors encouraged the use of slide presentations, electronics, and online materials to facilitate presentations and discussions.

- Requirement for guided research papers

In order to train students to research, some instructors assigned research papers with guidelines and checkpoints. Students were required to demonstrate comprehension and show progress at the checkpoints.

- Use of cooperative working groups

To facilitate learning in the classrooms, instructors often used cooperative groups where stronger students were called upon to help the less able students. Groups varied between three and four. They often worked in a jigsaw style where each student would present a piece of the whole body of work.

- Communication of office hours for advisement

Instructors sought to support their students by communicating their office hours. Instructors did so often after giving back an assessment or after assigning some work.

Students were encouraged to make office appointments, as those times were more conducive to individual learning because of the one-on-one help.

- Use of code-switching in critical instances

Instructors did code-switch at time whereby they translated a key concept or a key word to help with students' comprehension of the lesson being taught. Code-switching allowed students to either relate to a concept, or to understand the meaning of such concept in the new language.

Theme 7: Proposals

The participants believed that, if implemented, a number of ideas could make a difference in the ways French speaking students became proficient in English. They suggested to:

- Hire professional tutors

Such tutors would provide individualized help to struggling students or students in need of academic assistance. Tutors would also bring students up to level bridging the academic gap some of them may have been facing.

- Recruit more non-native instructors

Students tended to feel comfortable (speaking French) around native instructors for reasons of nationality and commonality with French. Non-native instructors would cause that tendency to disappear at a minimum, and make students feel awkward speaking French. Additionally, the option of using French as a recourse would no longer exist prompting students to reach higher than they normally would.

- Recruit more English speaking students

The participants recognized that changing the culture around campus had to involve all stakeholders including students. Recruiting more English speaking students would have the advantage of pushing the use of the instructional language in and out of the classroom.

- Implement linguistic immersions in English countries.

The participants stressed the benefits that students would gain by experiencing the new language for any length of time. From oral proficiency to written competency, students would be able to learn (in) the new language in ways otherwise improbable, as they would be surrounded by the same language and culture of instruction.

- Enforce a stricter English only policy around campus.

Instructors suggested the need for tangibles measures, either by way of incentives or by coercion, or both, to urge students to speak the instructional language at all times around campus. After all, that is what students would do if they were in an English-speaking environment.

- Encourage students to participate in English only clubs (book club, debate club…)

The multitude of opportunities for students to use the target language appeared to be a necessity. Clubs and social circles and venues where the use of English is exemplified could help fill the gap to some degree.

- Enforce registration deadlines.

Instructors reported that late registration coupled with students' lack of readiness to start tertiary studies created significant instructional challenges at the beginning of the semester. In some cases, students started classes two or three weeks late in areas (English

preparatory programs) never seen before. As a result, instructors had to find ways to bring those students up to speed. To avoid such issues, instructors hoped to start all their students off at the same date.

Part II: Recommendations

The recommendations first detail some instructional strategies that instructors can implement in their classrooms. Second, practical ideas are offered to administrative authorities for a policy change that aim at supporting the implementation process of the instructional strategies. As seen in the findings, French speaking students are mainly displaying lack of proficiency in the instructional language. Given that instructors are the primary impacting agents for students' learning, offering them some resources to be even more effective justifies the foundation for the recommendations. A third component in the form of assessment and monitoring is added to help with full implementation of the recommendations.

II. 1. Instructional Strategies

Lectures

Lectures are present in all facets of college instruction. However, the traditional way of delivering this method of learning where the instructor is active and the student passive is finding some significant limits. The nature of the new learner partly explains why new learning strategies and new pedagogical methods should be implemented (Hack, 2013). The following strategies are a synthesis of research articles proposed by Fitzpatrick, Cronin, and Byrne (2011), Lom (2012), Watt, Vajoczki and Voros (2014), in

combination with an applied pedagogy from the teaching support program at Carnegie Mellon University (2015).

I. Structuring lectures:

- Start with an introduction, outline, agenda or visual representation of the lecture**.** This sets the stage for students and provides them with an organization framework. Some instructors even suggest providing a copy or skeleton of lectures to students. Technology can be used here such as video, podcast or something alike. For instance, videos or slide shows can be projected to reflect the important parts of lectures. This strategy responds to the problem of understanding lectures described in theme 1.
- Include signposts and transitions: these are linguistics markers that signal the articulations of one's lecture to students. Examples are: "Pay attention to this"; "The main thing is"; "What you should retain is". These cues help students organize the information. They also help students focus on the essential items and keep them from feeling overwhelmed with the volume of information. Themes 1 and 4 (overwhelming feelings) can be partly resolved by this strategy.
- Use a variety of examples: examples and analogies help students connect ideas, concepts to images they are already familiar with. Students remember best when they can draw analogies in the world surrounding them. Proceeding this way can help address the issues of keeping up with lectures, lack of familiarity with concepts, and lack of vocabulary described respectively in themes 1, 2 and 3.

- Include periodic summaries: lecture content can be heavy loads for students to bear because of its unknown nature. New knowledge can also be source of stress and anxiety. Frequent summaries can provide much relief to students. Again, this strategy helps address some of the needs in theme 1.
- Bring the lecture to a close: Provide a synthesis of the material covered. This can be done as a summary by the instructor or students, or both.

II. Grabbing and holding students' attention:

- Research shows that students' attention is high during the first minutes of lectures then falls and remains flat to only pick up towards the end. As a result, instructors should refocus students periodically using the cues previously mentioned.
- Emphasize relevance: connecting to current events, students' interests, pop culture is a means for motivation. This idea ties into the concept of relevancy of learning and analogies with daily world that students should be able to do. This technique addresses the issues of understanding lectures and lack of familiarity with concepts described in theme 1.
- Show enthusiasm: students are watching their instructors and reading their every moves. Showing enthusiasm is a way to communicate excitement about the material.
- Use humor: humor has proven a great motivator. Cartoons or jokes will hold students' attention. Be careful not to offend a group or culture.

  Both enthusiasm and humor create a comfortable non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom where students feel relatively safe trying new things and

volunteering for new tasks. As a result, students can speak more freely, stepping out of their shyness and/or lack of confidence described in theme 2.

- Connect lectures to assessments: letting students know that a section of the lecture will help them resolve a homework assignment or an upcoming evaluation will jump start their attention. The idea is to encourage students to select the pertinent information so as to be prepared for any assessment or assignment (themes 1 and 2).
- Involve students in lectures: if students are expected to play a role, then they will be more focused on the materials. Active learning is more meaningful to students. Students taking ownership of their learning will force them to be more competent learners as they will have to read (theme 1) and be prepared (theme 2) to play their parts.

III. Building interactivity into lectures:

- Pause to pose a thought/problem/question: give 1-2 minutes for students to write their answers. Then answers can be discussed and collected randomly and anonymously. The instructor can have a good sense about what students are grasping. As a result, issues of comprehension (theme 1), vocabulary acquisition or proficiency in theme 2, can be assessed in a fraction of time.
- Assign short tasks: short tasks such as “define a term”, “find examples”, or “find why for…” can be assigned to groups of two or three during the lecture (2-3 minutes). Also, group brainstorming can be implemented where students can all focus on the same question or different groups can brainstorm on different

questions or generate lists (3-5 minutes). The benefits of such activities are seen in students interacting with one another engaging in speaking activities (theme 2) and demonstrating comprehension (theme 1).

- Solicit specific questions from students: "Are there any questions?' is often a perfect way to negate questions as students tend to have no questions. Students can be asked to write down their questions and turn them in upon exit (to be answered during next class time.
- Class discussion: one option is to allow class time to discuss key points of the lecture or any other parts of the materials not understood. Discussing the materials not only makes students articulate the language (theme 2), but it also shows their comprehension or lack of (theme 1).
- Summary time in lecture: consider allowing time to students to summarize key points of the lecture. Such assignment could be collected for comprehension purposes only. Students will not be able to summarize what they did not understand. This activity gives instructors a clear idea of students' understanding of the lecture (theme 1).

IV. A few more ideas aiming at reassuring students and creating a safe and comfortable learning environment (themes 1, 2).

- Break the ice: be approachable
- Consider how one addresses students
- Pace speech. Students need to keep up
- Monitor movement

- Make eye contact with students

Pedagogy and Cognition

I. The SIOP model:

Defined as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, this instructional framework was developed by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004). It seeks to make English language and content comprehensible to ELLs by designing and delivering high quality instruction. The reason for its recommendation lies in its ability to address vocabulary acquisition, improvement of oral and written proficiency in English. These are critical skills that the participants described in themes 1, 2, and 3. The SIOP model has been used in schools in the US and Asia including Korea with proven results (Song, 2016). It has eight components.

- 1st Component: lesson preparation

a. Content objectives are clearly defined, displayed and reviewed with students.
b. Language objectives are clearly defined, displayed and reviewed with students.
c. Supplemental materials are used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful.
d. Links are made explicitly between past learning and new concepts.
e. Key vocabulary is emphasized for students to see.

- 2nd Component: Building background

a. Adoption of content is made to all levels of student proficiency.
b. Meaningful activities are used to integrate lesson concepts with language practice opportunities.

c. Concepts are explicitly linked to students' background experience.

- 3rd Component: comprehensible input

a. Appropriate speech for students' proficiency levels is modeled.

b. Clear explanation of academic tasks is intentionally made.

c. A variety of techniques are used to make content concepts clear.

- 4th Component: strategies

a. Ample opportunities are provided for students to apply learning strategies.

b. Scaffolding techniques are consistently used to assist and support student understanding.

c. A variety of questions or tasks are used to promote higher-order thinking skills.

- 5th Component: interactions

a. Frequent opportunities are provided for interactions and discussions.

b. Grouping configuration is used to support language and content objectives of the lesson.

c. Sufficient wait time is provided for student responses.

d. Ample opportunities are provided for students to clarify key concepts as needed.

- 6th Component: practice and application

a. Hands-on materials or manipulatives are provided for students to practice.

b. Activities are provided for students to apply content and language knowledge.

c. Activities are used to integrate all language skills.

d. Content objectives are clearly supported by lesson delivery.

- 7th Component: lesson delivery

a. Language objectives are clearly supported by lesson delivery.

b. Students are engaged approximately 90% to 100% of the class period.

c. Pacing of the lesson is appropriate to students' ability levels.

- 8th Component: review and Assess

a. Comprehensive review is provided to review key vocabulary.

b. Comprehensive review is provided to review key content concepts.

c. Regular feedback is provided to students on their output.

d. Assessment is done for student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives.

II. Scaffolding:

This strategy uses some of the steps previously described. Scaffolding is not meant to water down concepts or problems for the learner. Rather, it seeks to break down difficult concepts to facilitate comprehension. By making content accessible students, they are put in position to succeed. Hence, feelings of frustration resulting from under-achievement or difficulty to understand the materials (Themes 1, 2, 3, 4) can then be eliminated. Six short steps are proposed here.

- Show and tell: demonstrate and model what is expected from students.
- Tap into prior knowledge: make connections. Tap into what students are familiar with. Draw analogies.
- Give time to talk: allow time for students to process information (think-pair-share; turn-to-your-partner).

- Pre-teach vocabulary: this is not a definition contest. Instead introduce key vocabulary in pictures, analogies, or contexts already familiar to students
- Use visuals: graphic organizers, charts, or pictures can be very helpful.
- Pause, ask questions, pause, review: keep students engaged by allowing them to think, share, process information, and check for comprehension in an environment absent of anxiety.

III. A few more cognitive strategies:

The cognitive strategies refer to learning techniques. Suggesting them offer more options and varieties to instructors in their classrooms. These strategies have been researched and suggested by Ogle (1986), O'malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper (1985) and the University of Oklahoma (2014).

- Note taking: students are encouraged to write down the main idea, important points, outline, and/or summary of information presented. Students should look for or listen to such linguistic markers as "first, second, the most important thing, in conclusion". This basic skill can help with lecture comprehension (theme 1), or reading comprehension (theme 2).
- Keyword: students are taught to remember a new word in the second language by a) connecting it with a word in the first language that sounds like/resembles it; b) generating images of some relationship between the new word and the familiar word. This process benefits vocabulary acquisition and addresses some of the challenges depicted in theme 2.

- Imagery: similar to keyword, students are taught to relate new information to visual concepts through familiar visualizations, phrases, contexts, or locations.
- 3 Post-it notes: working in small groups, students generate key ideas/themes/concepts from a reading or discussion, which can serve as guides for further study or review. When implemented properly, this strategy pushes students to use their reading and speaking skills while lessening any anxiety in the learning environment. Reading issues seen in themes 1 and 2, speaking problems in theme 2, and feelings of frustration resulting from being swamped summarized in theme 4 all begin to find a resolution. The procedure is as follows:

1. Have each student write one word on an index card or a notepad that he/she thinks summarizes the reading.
2. Have each student write a phrase on an index card or a notepad that he/she thinks summarizes the reading.
3. Have each student write a sentence on an index card or a notepad that he/she thinks summarizes the reading.
4. In small groups have students first compare their one-word summary, then their phrase, and finally, their sentence.

- Cus and Discuss (University of Oklahoma, 2014): this text annotation strategy helps students analyze texts and comprehend information. The procedure is as follows:

1. Have students:

C: Circle new words

U: Underline details/evidence to support main ideas

S: Star main ideas

2. Have students discuss what they circled, underlined, and starred with a partner and then with the class.
3. An option is to have students circle, underline, and star any variation you choose. For example, have students circle key characters, etc. C.U.S. has the merit of building students' confidence while making them practice the language. In this process, it helps resolve some of the issues raised in themes 1, 2, and 4.

- Jigsaw: a Jigsaw can be used to break up complex or multiple readings and encourages students to share responsibility for each other's learning. It can also help develop group listening and speaking skills targeting thereby some of the challenges in themes 1 and 2. Following is the procedure:

1. Divide the material (chapter text for example) and assign in equal parts according to number of members in a group.
2. Students read an assigned portion of a text, becoming the "expert" about their portion.
3. Each group will contain a member from each section and they will all share their findings from their own section.

4. Extra scaffolding: groups may also start by having the same section and sharing first with each other, building the confidence in the material of each member before they share in their mixed groups.

- Inverted pyramid (University of Oklahoma, 2014): inverted Pyramid can be used to explore essential questions, texts, infographics, or videos. It is a dynamic strategy developed to assist confident analysis and commentary. This strategy is closely linked to the Jigsaw strategy in that it is interactive, takes away any fear of failure, and makes students work on their reading comprehension and speaking skills (themes 1, 2, 3 and 4). Below is the procedure.

1. After students examine or read a text/concept, have students get with a partner. Meeting with a partner is more intimate and less intimidating.
2. Allow partners time to analyze the text/concept.
3. Next, those partners should find another set of partners-creating a small group.
4. In this small group, partners share each other's thoughts with the new partners. This repetition of ideas allows students to flesh out what is significant and what is less important. It also allows them to expand their perspective to include other perspectives.
5. This expanding of partners can be done again if needed. The more times the students discuss, the more they are vetting their own thoughts. The repeated defense of their ideas builds confidence and they are also encouraged to learn from others and share others' thoughts.

6. The last target of the inverted pyramid is whole group. After small groups have met for an adequate time, bring them all together as a class to share their analysis.

- K-W-H-L graphic organizer (Ogle, 1986): students use the graphic organizer to investigate a topic, lesson, or problem. Various ways to use the graphic organizer are to analyze a video clip, a document, or artifact; conduct research, gather information, or solve a problem. This strategy is at the heart of deconstructing a text and learning to write effectively. This strategy specifically targets writing issues seen in theme 3. Below is the procedure.

1. Students complete a task using the graphic organizer.
2. WHAT I Know- Students brainstorm all they know about the topic or problem.
3. WHAT I Don't Know- What would the student like to learn, know, or solve.
4. HOW will I find the Information – Participant conducts investigation or research and list resources, text, pages, or methods.
5. What Have I LEARNED – Participant summarizes findings or solutions.

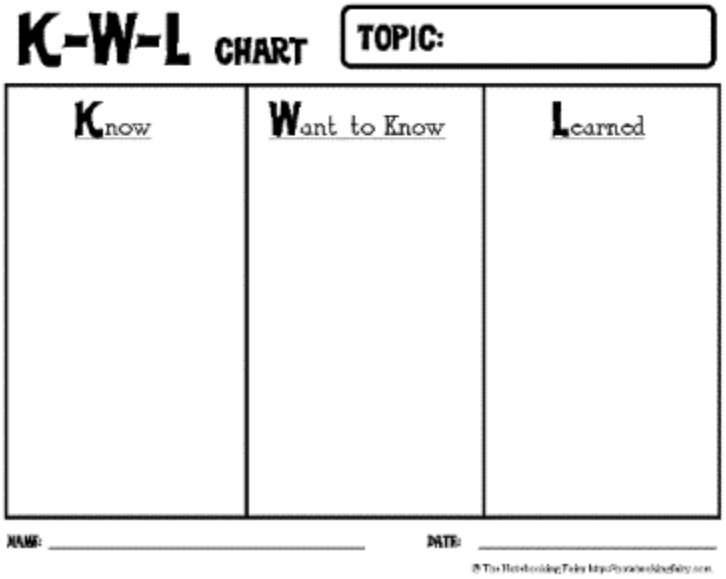

Figure 1. Example of K-W-H-L chart

- This session will be a success if…

  As presenters, students will sometimes find themselves standing in front of a group of participants who have no expectations for the time they will spend with their peers. This strategy motivates participants to actively look for ways the session will benefit them and be a valuable use of their time. As much as this strategy builds students' confidence, it also makes them improve their oral proficiency (theme 2). The procedure is as follows:

1. Ask participants to complete the statement, "This session will be a success if…"
2. In small groups, participants share their responses very briefly.
3. Group members combine their responses into one statement and post them somewhere in the room.

4. At the end of the session, the presenter asks participants to reflect on the session with their "This session will be a success if…" Which expectations were met? Which topics or issues would you like to have more information about?

- Cubing (Wallace, Pearman, Hail, & Hurst, 2007): this strategy can help students approach reading and writing from multiple angles. As a reading tool, this strategy helps students to analyze a text. As a writing tool, cubing helps students organize their ideas and thoughts. Depending on how it is used, cubing can help resolve reading issues (themes 1, 2, and 3) and writing problems (theme 3). Cubing can also be used as an assessment tool to gauge the comprehension level of students. The procedure is as follows.

1. Select a topic/text or book that has enough depth to support multiple perspectives.
2. Generate six questions per cube with each question corresponding to a higher-level thinking skill. It is a good idea to keep at least one question, possibly more, opinion-based with no right or wrong answer
3. Write the questions inside the cubes. However, if the cube is too small, labels can be made and referenced on a separate sheet of paper. An example could be:

Describe

Justify-Analyze-List

Pretend

Compare

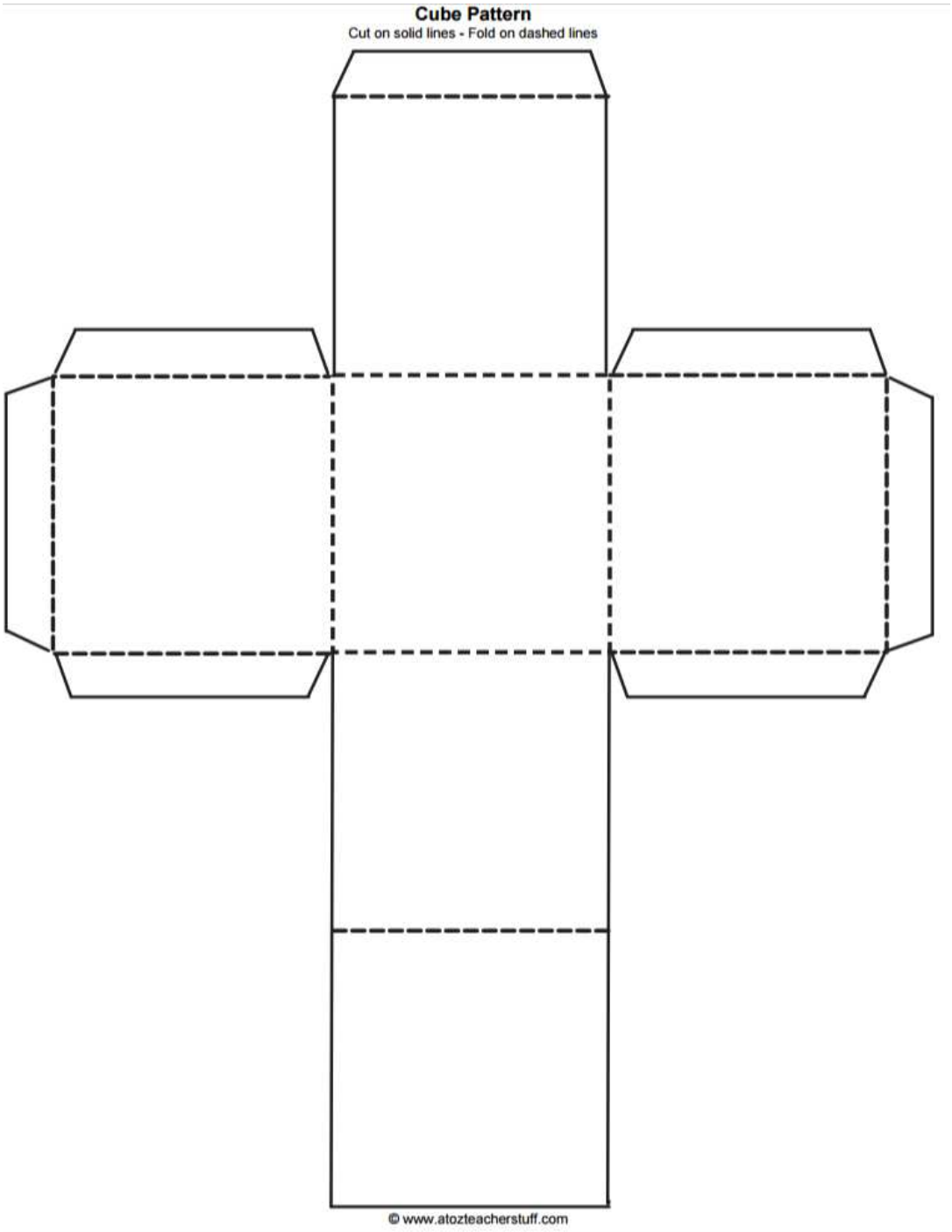

Figure 2. Example of a cube

- Finally, technology, technology, and more technology: millennium kids are said to be technology inclined (Werth & Werth, 2011). Incorporate technology in lesson plans as much as possible. The use of technology can be as simple as elaborate on a theme/concept/topic; research specific questions; record/videotape an event/situation, then analyze it etc. Technology will simply help with student overall learning experience whatever the subject or level of students.

II. 2. Administrative Policy Change

Administrative leaders have a role to play to support student proficiency and academic literacy in order to achieve the sought out culture change. Some of the following suggestions were made by the participants in this study. They include:

- Set up a linguistic immersion program with regional universities (to minimize costs) for at least a semester. This will allow French speaking students to experience both the language and the culture behind it, although it may be from the western culture. This proposal was made by the participants in the study under theme 7.
- In addition to the TOEFL, screen new students to identify different ability levels so as to adapt a more effective intervention (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010). This process will eliminate classes with multi-levels of proficiency which are causes of slow progress. Then, tailored instruction can be provided to students who need remedial help. This process offers a remedy to issues of college readiness and expectations in theme 4.

- Recruit more English speaking students to create a more effective language immersion around campus. An impression of overwhelming English language needs to be created to surround all speakers so as to offer no other alternative for another language. This policy is directed to deal with the lack of opportunities to speak the instructional language, as well as the constant culture clash detailed in theme 5. Problems of pronunciation in theme 2 can also begin to be corrected as French speaking students interact with native speakers.
- Create more clubs and associations where students can meet, exchange, and discuss ideas, ambitions, or goals. This idea reinforces the previous one in that it multiplies the opportunities for students to improve their English proficiency. Hence it provides a solution for issues in themes 2 and 5.
- Enforce admission deadlines to avoid students' difficult academic starts. Late start for French speaking students implies remediation and tutoring to bring students up to speed. This can help with the gap between college readiness and college expectations as well as possible frustrations resulting from heavy loads of work (theme 4).
- Intensify (by involving all adjunct faculty) and publicize counseling and tutoring sessions for all students. If necessary, provide incentive such as coupons for cafeteria, tickets for shows, or homework pass. This idea responds to students' lack of motivation to seek advice (theme 4). Students should realize that seeking advice or extra-help is a regular and normal learning stance, and should not wait until they are in critical academic positions.

- Create a survival booklet for newcomers that will include: What to know; Where to go for…; Who to see for…; General Expectations; Important dates; Reading suggestions; Writing samples… Such survival kits are being used in Australian and Asian universities (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010; Glew, Dixon, and Shannon, 2015). The idea is to equip new students with practical questions/answers upon arrival on campus at IUGB. A number of issues can thus be answered, particularly the problems described in theme 4.
- Finally, recruit faculty with mastery command of the instructional language (Byun, Chu, Kim, Park, Kim, & Jung, 2010). This is by far the hardest suggestion to implement due to its financial constraint. However, one cannot deny that this type of faculty represents a valuable resource towards supporting student proficiency in the instructional language. The findings did not unveil any issues of accent or pronunciation from the instructors. However, at least one participant did report that he wrote on the board a lot because of his own limited command of English. The benefit of instructors with great command of English is a live palpable exemplar of what students could rise to. The impact on their language acquisition process is limitless (Byun, Chu, Kim, Park, Kim, & Jung, 2010). Clearly, having such experts can tremendously help with all the challenges the issues seen in themes 1, 2, 3, and 4.

II. 3. Assessment and Monitoring

The assessment and monitoring aspects of the project will eventually determine the worthiness of the whole project (Scarcella, 2003). Full implementation of the project

will require guidelines and checkpoints. Both instructional authorities led by the Chief Academic Officer and the participating faculty will need to work hand in hand for a positive outcome. In order to have a clear sense of direction, instructors are being recommended the following steps based on a step by step approach proposed by Scarcella (2003) and Daffron and Jordan (2012).

- Designate lead instructors per department to coordinate this phase.

  It is essential to designate a coordinator so other colleagues know who to turn to for questions and answers.

- Pre-assess students at the beginning of the course or semester.

  Knowing what students know at the beginning is essential to gauge whether there was progress or not at the end of the program. This is comparable to a pre/post test in a research study.

- Record data.

- Select, then teach and/or administer the chosen strategies to students. Do this as an intrinsic component of the instructor's course. The new strategies must be taught rigorously and methodically to hope to yield some result. The strategies refer to any of the instructional strategies described earlier.

- Document the frequency of usage (every class period/every day same period…)

- When appropriate, assess students (follow normal rhythm of the course).

  Following the regular pace of the curriculum will be more realistic and the results will be more pertinent. The results of assessments will indicate if students are on track or if there is a total absence of progress.

- Record data.
- Compare new data with pre-assessment data

  The reason for this comparison is to identify and analyze any difference and see there was any gained learning. At this point instructors identify gains and losses. Next, they should look for explanations for losses and replicate gains.
- Meet, discuss, and collaborate with colleagues at regular intervals for give and take sessions. Instructors with outstanding results may share their secret recipes to the group and so on. Collaboration as a collective strategy is critical in that it provide a learning platform for all for a more effective instruction (Dufour & Mattos, 2013).

Laid out in this manner, this plan allows instructional and administrative leaders to keep up with the implementation progress.

Finally, at the end of the semester, a formal assessment should be conducted that will examine the strategies used, the frequencies, and the scores. These data could then be compared to the data from the previous year in order to identify any gains or areas of concern. The result from this exercise should be more improvement as areas of concern would be addressed.

Web Site Resources

The following is a suggestion for extra resources online based. Instructors and administrators can decide to try them out or not. These are strictly optional resources.

www.beesburg.com/edtools/glossary.html

www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies

https://k20center.ou.edu/instructional-strategies/

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Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

The purpose of these questions is to explore faculty members' experiences and opinions as they interact with French speaking students throughout the process of academic literacy acquisition.

1. Tell me a little about your background as an instructor at IUGB.
2. How much of your workday are you engaged in working with French speaking students?
3. How would you characterize your interactions with French speaking students?
4. How much of your interactions with your students take place in English, and when do you decide to speak French if at all?
5. To what extent do you think French speaking students are struggling with your subject area?
6. How do you measure the extent to which French speaking students are experiencing literacy difficulties in:
    a) Reading (texts, assigned book reading),
    b) Writing (essays),
    c) Speaking (verbal expressions, presentations)
    d) And listening (to lectures, authentic recordings)
7. What are areas or contents where French speaking students experience the most difficulties? Why?

8. Describe the effect/impact of the educational background of French speaking students on their literacy acquisition process (in reading, writing, speaking, and listening).
9. Describe how often and what circumstances French speaking students seek advice with their instructors.
10. Exactly what would you like to see taking place (administration & school policies) to help address the issue of academic literacy at IUGB?
11. In your opinion as an instructor, what instructional strategies would you suggest to help improve students' academic literacy challenges in:
    a) reading?
    b) Writing?
    c) Speaking?
    d) Listening?

12. Can you tell me more about the interactions that took place during my observation? (optional question for participants whose classrooms I observed)

Appendix C: Classroom Observation Guide

The purpose of the observation is to gain an insight about the nature and content of the interactions between faculty and students in the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

Location:

Instructor:

Subject:

Topic of Lesson:

Physical Setting

Instructional materials and usage: white board, technology, AV equipment etc…

Classroom Environment

Quiet/noisy classroom:

Students sitting down in semi-circle/traditional rows/other:

Students working individually or interacting in groups:

Age/gender of students- how many of each:

Position/location of instructor:

Instructor is lecturing or facilitating learning:

Age/gender/ethnicity of instructor:

Behaviors & Interactions

Types of activities:

Languages used:

Instructor's interactions with students (mannerism/animation/gestures):

Students' responses to instructor (type of participation: active/passive/animated):

Over all instructor dominated or student centered activities:

Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire

The purpose of these questions is to explore faculty members' experiences and opinions as they interact with French speaking students throughout the process of academic literacy acquisition.

1. Describe how French students respond to your lectures.
2. What types of weaknesses/deficiencies do French students display at the beginning of their college studies?
3. How well prepared academically are French students as they start their tertiary education?
4. How well do French speaking students follow or take your advice and suggestions?
5. What type of support or policy can be put in place to help French students with English language deficiency?

The following questions may be asked if the focus group discussions fail to address their initial purpose of addressing French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy: Describe the manifestation of French speaking students' challenges in academic literacy by addressing the following categories:

a) reading

b) writing

c) speaking

d) listening

Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation

International University of Grand-Bassam
B P 564 Grand-Bassam
Cote d'Ivoire

Date

Dear Laurent Bassa,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled French Speaking Students' Challenges in Academic Literacy at International University of Grand-Bassam within I.U.G.B. As part of this study, I authorize you to contact faculty members and administrative staff; observe and interview faculty members you may have selected for your research; collect and examine documents relevant to your research. For credibility issues, I allow you to speak to all of the participants in your study so they can verify their statements at the end of your research. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Providing a contact person; sending an email informing faculty members and administrative staff about the research study; providing logistic such as interview/conference room, table and chairs; supervision/respect of participants' schedules so as to minimize any disruptions. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the faculty and administrative staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Samuel Koffi

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).
IRB approval # 10-13-15-0253306.