Servant Leadership: Making a Difference in University TESL Programs

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Creating these programs require an understanding of ways to support English learners academically, linguistically, and culturally as they transition into English speaking schools. Based on the need for support, this article provides a model for university program leaders in meeting the need for future teachers by applying the principles, values, and practices of servant leadership.

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Introduction

…If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 4:11

Working in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) has been both a calling and a passion of mine. Teaching in this field over the past 25 years, I continue to see a need for advocacy and shared understanding of our "new neighbors." These new neighbors represent the exponential growth in the immigrant and refugee student population here in the United States and abroad. It is humbling to witness the courage and tenacity these students possess when navigating a new culture and language. I, like many, am drawn to the field not only because we are intrigued with learning from the rich linguistic and cultural experiences the students bring, but for the opportunity of serving others with diverse needs and abilities, doing so in a spirit of seeking justice and equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Teaching English as a Second Language is a field which encompasses programs designed to teach students from all languages and cultures around the world. Due to a combination of increasing numbers of non-native English learners (ELs) and their diverse linguistic and academic needs, there exists a significant need for qualified teachers and leaders in the field. In the United States, these students currently represent the fastest growing segment of the K-12 school population (NCELA, 2008). From 2000 to 2010, nearly 14 million new immigrants came to the U.S. alone, making it the highest-ever decade for immigration.

Emigrating from numerous countries around the world, ELs come from diverse backgrounds and languages, but most have in common a displacement from the familiar, a loss of possessions, and a need to learn English to navigate their new situation. Based on these issues, it is challenging for most educational institutions to fully meet the linguistic, academic, cultural, and psychological needs of this ever-increasing population (Flynn & Hill, 2005). These vast needs represent both challenges and opportunities for teachers to support their students.

To meet this challenge, universities must have a plan for implementing high-quality teacher education programs that specifically address ways of working with ELs. These programs require students to gain background in ways of adequately supporting ELs as they transition into English speaking schools.

This article provides a model for Christian TESL programs and universities in meeting the need for future teachers by applying the principles, values, and practices of servant leadership. This model is based on major servant leadership research across many fields. Also included are practical ideas for implementing the model, which originate from personal teaching experiences with immigrant and refugee students over the past 20 years.

Servant Leadership

As Christian educators, we are called to develop more than academic knowledge in our students. We are called to develop the whole person, spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially, to develop and model a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of all human beings (Anderson, 2005). We also aspire to build character akin to that of the Creator, to nurture thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others' thoughts, to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition, and to inspire and encourage development of each individual's potential (Bowman, 2005; Roy, 2003).

Consequently, these values closely relate an approach known as servant leadership. While the term servant leadership was first coined by Robert Greenleaf (1970), it is clearly a common principle incorporated in religious and humanistic teachings for thousands of years (Stephen 2007): "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28a).

Unlike leadership approaches with a top-down hierarchical style, Greenleaf (1970) describes a leadership approach that emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. Central to his thinking, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead by serving others, not to increase the leaders own power. The objective is to engender collaboration and growth of individuals as a viable model for leadership.

Continuing in the work of Greenleaf, close colleague Larry Spears (1996) further defined the characteristics of a servant leader. His model is based on ten characteristics of Servant Leadership including: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Spears defined servant leadership as a leadership style based upon teamwork, sense of community, participative decision-making, strong ethical, and caring behavior, and concern for growth of people.

Kathleen Patterson's (2003) model, the Seven Virtuous Constructs of Servant Leadership, adds to the understanding of servant leadership with a focus on the "agapao" love as motivation within the leader. It is through this love by which the leader considers the needs, wants, and desires of each person. Building from this love, the additional constructs of humility, altruism, vision, trust, and empowerment provide a theoretical model of the foremost characteristics of a servant leader.

Specific to educational settings, Matt Stephen (2007) has shown promising research on using these components in schools. His research confirms a relationship between servant leadership and positive school climate. Also, schools with greater practices of servant leadership achieve at a higher rate than schools using less servant leadership practices. Stephen also found a positive relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

Servant leadership is an approach with great promise for the field of TESL. There are mutually supportive commonalities between essential TESL practices and those of a servant leader which make it an excellent approach for Christian educators to use in the field. Using constructs from the aforementioned models, I present the Servant-Leadership for Teaching (SLT) model, specifically designed for the purpose of working with English learners. The components in the SLT model provide foundational elements for both serving ELs and preparing future teachers.

Servant-Leadership for Teaching		
Supporting And Transforming The Learning Environment	**Love of Service** Begins with the teacher's dedication, skill, and enthusiasm for meeting the unique, diverse linguistic and academic needs of English learners.	Modeled by the Professor/Teacher
	Respect Involves having regard for all persons, listening carefully and sharing ideas with an irenic spirit, to better understand the thoughts, beliefs and values which may be culturally and spiritually dissimilar to our own.	
	Trust Includes engendering positive relationships to benefit learning. These include relationships between teacher and student, and between students in the classroom to establish a safe, nurturing learning environment which supports active engagement in linguistic and academic growth.	
	Empathy Requires understanding the plight of the English language learner. Having awareness and sensitivity to the many refugees displaced by war; in economic distress with the added burden of language barriers, and prejudice.	
	Humility Encompasses an attitude of equality and individuality, understanding the worth of each individual as a precious work of God's creation. It is the opposite of taking a superior attitude of disseminating information without thought to the needs of each of the students.	
	Vision & Purpose Promotes student reflection and responsibility. In this essential component, students reflect on and set personal linguistic and academic learning goals. These goals provide a resource for teachers to support, guide, motivate, and encourage students.	
	Empowerment Initiates with students as the center of learning; an important part not only of the planning and goal setting but also empowering them to engage and achieve in the learning environment, encouraging individual growth and accountability.	
(Adapted from Spears, 1999; Patterson, 2003)		

All of the constructs in the SLT model support and transform the learning environment. Implementing the model begins with university professors modeling the constructs for pre-service teachers in their classes and continues with implementation in K-12 settings. Using the aforementioned components of love of service, respect, trust, empathy, and humility, transforms the learning environment by empowering students to engage and succeed in the learning environment. Setting goals through the construct of vision and purpose further supports students in achieving their goals.

Modeling these components in the university classroom empowers future teachers to create a similar learning environment for ELs. To demonstrate ways of implementing the model in the classroom, this article describes each of the aforementioned constructs with: (a) characteristics of the construct, (b) application in university settings, and (c) application in K-12 settings.

Love of Service
The model begins with the construct of love of service as the impetus for all other components in the model. It is based on the teacher's intrinsic dedication, skill, and enthusiasm for meeting the unique, diverse linguistic and academic needs of English learners. It includes a sincere interest in the gift and abilities of people from distinct languages and cultures.

Jennings and Stahl-Wert (2004) stress that service begins with one who truly wants to serve; to serve first and lead second. They believe that being a servant leader means being committed to taking into account the needs of the learners first and foremost; to develop a spirit of collegiality and not teacher as controller or manager, but rather teacher as inspirer of students, a desire to make a difference in the lives of others, to share their challenges, learn from their unique assets, and celebrate their accomplishments.

In Christian educational institutions, love is the cornerstone (Patterson, 2003). It is the calling to make a difference in the lives of others; to teach by showing care for each individual, seeking the gifts God has given to each and every student, and building on their strengths. This requires teachers to take the time to get to know their students strengths and abilities, and to differentiate instruction to meet the varying needs of students. The common

approach of, "Here is the lesson…you either get it or not" is antiquated at best. Current methods in teaching would prescribe an approach that begins at the students' current level and focuses on what they need to proceed.

One of the best ways to model love of service is to share one's passion of working the field. Students are often inspired by learning what brought teachers to the field and what continues to fuel their passion. I tell students, "This class is one of my favorite classes to teach," which is true in part due to the content, but also for the students. I like the challenge in finding ways of engaging students in class and making learning memorable. Students have made comments of how much more they enjoy the class when the professor is passionate about it and expresses why the class is relevant and important for them (Tahtinen-Pacheco, 2010; 2011).

–Application in University Settings
As TESL educators, love of service compels us to build a solid program, based on national and state standards, to model best pedagogical practices, and support students with opportunities to "practice teaching." For example, in my senior-level methods course, I ask students to co-teach a lesson with me. We meet and plan the lesson together and discuss ideas and strategies for the lesson. This shared planning time provides a unique opportunity for me to show students how lessons are planned, how to determine the objectives for a lesson, and how to make decisions about materials and activities. It also provides an opportunity to build relationships with the students.

Another activity that makes an impact on student's attitudes toward teaching is service-learning. For this activity, students in the class tutor an EL for the duration of the class. During the weekly sessions, students develop a relationship with their service-learning partner and in return learn about a language and culture different from their own. This experience transforms their worldview (both heart and mind) far beyond the textbook. This increased understanding not only affirms their call to teach, it is significant for those who will work with ELs in their future teaching career, especially for students with little previous experience working with people from other countries.

–Application in K-12 Settings
Love of service is also noticed in K-12 settings. It has been said, in K-12 settings, that students can tell instantly if the teacher likes them or cares about them or not. Aptly so, Klem and Connell (2004) found that students are more engaged in the classroom environment when the teacher shows kindness and caring toward the students. Being kind and compassionate in the classroom is precisely what God is calling and equipping us to do.

During the semester, I regularly visit schools and observe my students as they are teaching and interacting with students. It is easy to discern those who enjoy working with students and gain innate energy from teaching. These experiences affirm their calling to teach, to proceed with passion in the mission of fulfilling their purpose.

Respect

The construct of respect in the SLT model involves treating each person as a valued creation of God. It means having regard for all persons, listening carefully, and mutually sharing ideas without judgment, to better understand the thoughts, beliefs, and values which may be culturally and spiritually dissimilar to our own. It promotes an irenic spirit, maintaining integrity, self awareness, and authenticity of the individuals and building collegial relationships in a safe and caring learning environment.

Respect, in the classroom, begins with being knowledgeable in the content of the course. It includes holding high standards for the course content and conduct. This continues with the professor/teacher modeling these standards through best practices in teaching and preparing for the course and lessons. Being well prepared shows respect for students' time and learning. Students appreciate professors who are knowledgeable and prepared, which sends a message to students that the class is important.

–Application in University Settings
In the classroom, we can engender respect by intentionally getting to know each other and the background experiences we bring to the classroom. Including activities for students to share their personal knowledge and experiences causes them to engage not only in their small group, but connect with the whole class. Students in a respectful environment are also more willing to continue to share ideas during the semester. Two examples of activities used to begin building this environment include:

Common Commotion. I often use this activity the first day of class as an effective "ice-breaker." To begin, students are each given a handout with two columns. The column on the left includes a list of characteristics relevant to all students including categories like birthday month, year in school (freshman, sophomore, etc.). The column on the right is blank and has space to write names of classmates for each of the categories. To begin the activity, I say the first characteristic (for example: favorite ice cream flavor), students then go around the room to find other students with a favorite ice cream flavor in common. After locating students with the same "ice-cream flavor" they write the names of all those in common to the right of the category. I choose categories that will help students get to know each other and build relationships within the class and conclude the activity by asking about the connections students made. I also make sure that ALL students have connected with at least three others in the class.

Personal Profile. A second activity which builds respect through deeper understanding, involves sharing background experiences relevant to class topics. For this activity, students write a two page, personal profile, describing their experiences on the topics(s) of the class. For example, in my entry level linguistics class, I ask students to describe their experiences learning a second language (which is a main topic of the class). I provide lots of guiding questions to help them recall previous experiences. Reading these papers at the beginning of the semester really helps me to get to know the students. I use the information from these personal profiles all during the semester to connect students to the new material we are learning. For example, if I know one student has background on the topic for the day, (i.e., negation in Spanish vs. English), I encourage students into the conversation to offer their "expertise". This really helps to build respect as students realize their personal learning experiences are honored in the class.

–Application in K-12 Settings
Respect is essential in building relationships and trust in EL settings. Too many times I have heard teachers in K-12 settings comment that their newcomer EL student "does not know anything," or

"does not speak English." This is not true and quite offensive for the student who can understand enough English to comprehend what the teacher just said. Being intentional about the words we use and how we say things send messages of respect for all learners.

One way of being intentional is to learn to pronounce student's names correctly. My last name, Tahtinen-Pacheco, has proven difficult for many to know how to pronounce; its length alone can be intimidating. I appreciate when someone tries to learn and say my name correctly and students tell me they feel the same. For this reason, I begin each class by learning student names and correct pronunciation; it may not be easy, but it is a great way to build relationship and respect.

In a former teaching experience, our school received a new student named, Tlaloc. This name proved too challenging for one of the teachers. She said to the student, "Your name is too difficult. Can we just call you Frank?" He sheepishly agreed to let her call him Frank. What message does it send to students when teachers don't learn their student's names? What message does it send when they do?

In the K-12 ESL classroom, it is also very important to maintain a barometer of respect which includes sensitivity and awareness of classroom climate. Beyond common classroom rules, many teachers ignore behaviors that "aren't so bad" or seem only "borderline disrespectful". How does one decide what should or should not be tolerated? Whose values of appropriateness are most important?

In the EL classroom, let the construct of respect be the guide. I recommend implementing the rule that if something is disrespectful, to anyone in the class, it will not be accepted in class. This rule is created out of respect for all members of the class, rather than judging between right and wrong. For example, in Mexican culture, the word "stupid" can be very offensive and carries much stronger meaning than in the neighboring U.S. culture. For this reason, a word that may not have strong connotations is simply not used in that class out of respect for a member of the class (which includes the teacher). Teaching students to think about others and their feelings is an important life-long character trait. Consequently, not dealing with issues of respect makes the learning environment feel unsafe for students.

Similar to the profile activity for university students, the following is a commonly used activity for K-12 settings. This activity is helpful in determining what background knowledge students already have on the topic you will be teaching.

KWL. This stands for Know, Would like to know, and Learned. For this activity, students begin by listing all of the things they know about the topic under the "K" at the top of the page. Next students write all of the things they would like to know about the topic under the "W." After the lesson, students then list things they learned about the topic under the "L." Keep in mind, if you use this activity with beginning English learners who may not be able to articulate their answers in English, allow them to write in the their native language, draw their answers, work with a partner, or share answers verbally and have someone transcribe their comments.

As teachers, working with ELs, it is essential to take time to get to know our students. By knowing our students' abilities, we can build on the knowledge they already have and know how to best support learning new material. Inviting students to share their knowledge as "experts" in areas they know, is a positive way to support all students and engender a respectful learning environment. An example of this happened while teaching a lesson on the rain forests of South America. One student, who had been raised near the rain forest in Ecuador, was able to tell classmates incredible details of the flora and fauna near his home. Students were fascinated with his experiences, which enriched the lesson and gave him "super star" status in the class.

Trust
The construct of trust in the SLT model includes engendering positive relationships to benefit learning. These include relationships between teacher and student, and between fellow students in the classroom. They go beyond "knowing about" classmates to "caring for" classmates. Community building activities help in creating a safe learning environment that supports active engagement in linguistic and academic growth. Trust is developed in students as they experience building community in the classroom. This type of classroom creates an environment where students learn from each other and often develop life-long friendships in the class.

–Application in University Settings
Teaching over the past two decades, I have seen many changes in both content and students. However, one thing remains a constant, and that is, the need or desire for connection. When students directly understand how class content is connected to their lives, they develop a respect and trust for the content, which not only assists in the learning process, but in retaining the material.

To promote student connections with each other, I incorporate numerous community building activities. Community building sets the stage for deeper growth and understanding of each other, especially in regard to ideas and reference points. Students will participate more in an environment where they feel comfortable in asking questions when needed. Ways to create community in the classroom include:

- Structured small group activities where students can share their ideas with just a few students instead of the whole group.

- Shared common experiences and time to process the experience.

- Opinion lines: Students get up and form a line in front of the room with one side designated as agree and the opposite side disagree and in between various degrees of agreement or disagreement. They are next asked to pair up and discuss their thinking with someone who has a very different opinion from their own.

Prayers for one another. We begin each class with a short devotion and then a prayer. At the beginning of the semester, I lead the devotions and prayer. After a few weeks, I ask for students to volunteer. We offer to pray for anyone suggested by students. By the end of the semester, students genuinely seem to care for one another, freely ask for prayer, and pray for classmates.

–Application in K-12 Settings
Trust is vital in any setting, but especially important in TESL settings. For example, community-based programs that begin with only a few students will increase exponentially if the students feel it is a safe and productive place to learn. Trust is a key issue in not only getting students to join the class, but also to participate in the class.

When building trust, it is important not to ask ELs to respond in English until they are ready and not to embarrass them in front of their peers. For example,

Juan, a newcomer sixth grade student was welcomed to class by a well-meaning teacher who asked him to introduce himself. To "help" Juan, she had written, My name is ____ on the board. Juan, using his knowledge of reading in Spanish, replied with, "Me nah-mae es Juan." Laughter broke out in the room and even though the teacher scolded the children, Juan would not speak in that class for the next several weeks.

To create a more positive beginning experience for newcomer students, I encourage teachers to speak with their class prior to the arrival of the new student. Have the class learn some things about the home culture of the student and a greeting to share in the student's native language. Ask students to respond to the greeting in their own language (it is easy to locate greetings in most languages via the internet). Also, assign a "buddy" to students who will help them get acclimated to their new school. These small additions can make a big difference for new students.

Empathy
The construct of empathy in the SLT model involves understanding the plight of the immigrant. Having an awareness and sensitivity to the many refugees displaced by war, forced to leave their homeland with little to no possessions, is essential for teachers to fully empathize with their students. Many students and their families, in the process of rebuilding their lives, often deal with the added burdens of economic distress, language barriers, and unsolicited prejudice.

–Application in University Settings
One of the best ways to increase empathy in your students is by providing opportunities for them to put theory into practice through service-learning opportunities. Service-learning opportunities help students meet and learn from others outside of the university learning community. These opportunities transform students understanding of the plight of the English learner. In our program, students spend 30 hours during the semester working in a program called SALT (Somali Adult Literacy Training) where they tutor newcomer Somali men and women in the Somali community. Most students say that this experience has completely transformed their thinking about the challenges and difficulties of starting a life in a new country. Often times, students choose to continue to meet with their

service-learning partners well beyond the course requirements.

Providing real, face-to-face experiences for students to get to know someone from another country can significantly expand their world view. Providing students with experiences in culture and language builds bridges of understanding between viewpoints and customs.

One activity I include in the classroom comes from an excellent resource titled, *Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL: A Resource Book for Teaching K-12 English Learners* (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). This activity titled, Cultural Content, asks students to share elements of their personal culture in areas of: family structures, interpersonal relationships, religion, history, and traditions and holidays. Using this activity, I have found that even in a homogeneous university classroom, students are surprised to find an abundance of cultural differences. This leads to discussion and deeper understanding of cultural stereotypes.

In my courses, I also use books and media to help students gain understanding and awareness of the plight of ELs. One example is the video titled, *God Grew Tired of Us*. This captivating film tells the incredible story of the Lost Boys of Sudan beginning with the harrowing trials endured by the young boys during their time in Sudan in refugee camps all the way to their first few years in the United States. Students are affected by the tenacity and trials never before imagined.

Fortunately, I was able to meet one of the lost boys from the film, John Bul Dau, and asked him to give my students a message. He wrote a message in my book which said, "Never give up." This impacted one of my students so greatly that he decided to connect with John Bul Dau after graduation and work with his foundation to raise money to care for people in Sudan.

Other books I have found useful in helping students gain background knowledge and perspective include:

Yang, K. (2008). *The Latehomecomer*. Coffee House Press.

Michie, G. (1999). *Holler if you hear me: The education of a teacher and his students*. Teachers College Press.

Rempel, L. (2004). *Hey, Hmong girl, whassup? The journal of Choua Vang*. St. Paul, MN: Hamline U. Press.

Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services. (2011). *This much I can tell you: Stories of courage and hope from refugees in Minnesota*. Beaver's Pond Press, Edina, MN.

Finally, the best way of teaching empathy is demonstrating it while working with the students. When students come to me with a problem or concern about not getting an assignment in on time, it gives me the opportunity to show empathy for their situation. I do not lower expectations for the course outcomes, but certainly make alternative paths for students to show mastery of the course concepts. This may mean extra time, or finding alternative ways of showing mastery. Creating alternative pathways for success is a crucial part of working with ELs and modeling this at the university level will help teachers when it is their turn to have empathy in their own classroom.

–Application in K-12 Settings
Empathy in K-12 settings begins with time and understanding. Students coming from refugee camps may have not had opportunities to attend school and therefore have gaps in content-area knowledge. Taking time to encourage students and support them is fundamental in for academic growth. Creating a support-network (Tahtinen-Pacheco, 2009) for students shows you care and have some understanding of how hard they are working to not only learn new material but learn it in a new language.

Years ago, while teaching in an elementary school in Houston, TX, I was asked to make home visits to the families of my students. During these visits, I was able to gain perspective and build stronger relationships with parents by taking the time to meet with them in their home. I was often surprised by the modest places they lived; one being a renovated chicken coop, another had only dirt floors. Most of my students did not have their own bedroom and many shared beds or couches with siblings. I never would have guessed this was their living situation, as these students always showed up for school clean, suitably dressed, and ready for school. By getting to know my students outside of the classroom, I had greater understanding and empathy for them and their circumstances.

Humility

The construct of humility in the SLT model encompasses an attitude of equality and individuality, understanding the worth of each individual as a precious work of God's creation. It's the opposite of taking a superior attitude of disseminating information without thought to the needs of each of the students.

–Application in University Settings
Teaching humility in the classroom begins with modeling the expectations and practices we teach. It includes being a reflective teacher and looking humbly at our own mistakes and treating students with the same respect we expect from them. It not only includes maintaining high standards for the course and students, but offering grace and understanding when they fall short.

We teach that when working with others who may have differing beliefs, values, and cultural norms; we work not to show others what is right or wrong, but to show God's love in its finest form, without judgment or disdain for values or opinions that may be different from our own.

On campus it is important for students to notice the multicultural environment around them and be open to opportunities where God can call them to share and help others. It is especially important for students to foster relationships with students from all backgrounds. Developing sensitivity toward injustice, unkindness, and inequities is especially important.

Teaching and modeling ways our students can support ELs in the community at large is also important. In neighborhoods close to our university there are many newcomers needing to learn English. We have numerous opportunities to make a difference in the lives of many. Sharing our time and resources with others shows the love in our hearts that God has created. To serve Him is to serve others.

–Application in K-12 Settings
Humility demonstrated in the TESL environment is not, "Am I doing a good job as a teacher?" as much as, "Am I meeting the students' needs?" The answer to the first questions lies in the answer to the second question. We must take away the notion of successful teaching as getting to the end of the book before the end of the term. We replace it with,

getting as far (if not farther than the end of the book) as the students can go. Consequently, it is not about measuring our personal success as teachers by how far we get, but by how many students came with us.

Vision and Purpose

The construct of vision and purpose in the SLT model is an essential component in which students reflect on and set personal linguistic and academic learning goals. These goals provide a resource for teachers to support, guide, motivate, and encourage students.

Vision and purpose thrive in a student-centered classroom with a teacher planning meaningful, cognitively challenging, and engaging lessons based on student needs and interests. This includes creating a well planned syllabus with room for student choice and investment in the course. It means creating situations in and outside of the classroom where students are asked to practice and apply new information. It also includes staying engaged in the discourse of the content-area field, bringing current ideas and research into the course.

–Application in University Settings
One way of igniting vision and purpose for students is to make learning meaningful. Revisiting previously learned material and linking it to current and future material motivates students. Teaching them ways of reflecting and revising personal goals supports life-long learning. Examples of two activities used to activate vision and purpose in learning are:

School-based Collaboration. For this activity, students are given an opportunity to work with K-12 teachers in a collaborative team effort. Groups of four to five students are paired up with a K-12 teacher. In these groups, students meet weekly with their teacher, via web-cam, and discuss issues and questions their teacher has regarding ELs. Next, students work collaboratively in their groups to research answers/solutions to the questions from their teacher and then share the information the following week during their meeting. Each week they ask for more questions to research. Students must be prepared to back up their answers with research-based responses. They are also asked to share their small group discussion with the class, which helps all students gain further insight into the real issues teachers are facing. This leads to

significant, in-depth class discussion based on student research.

Critical Discussion with Theorists. Another activity which can be used in any classroom is inviting "guests" to the class. For this activity, I ask for student volunteers who would like to represent one of the theorists from our class material. (For example: Piaget, Skinner, Vygotsky). I put the remaining students in small groups and ask them to come up with questions they would ask the theorists when he/she visits the class. While they are working on this, I meet with the "theorists" and let them know that they will be answering questions based on what they think their character might say. After 15-20 minutes of preparation time, I bring in the "theorists." Students ask questions and try to guess who the "guest" is based on the answers given.

–Application in K-12 Settings
One example used at the beginning of the year is called, Hopes and Dreams. The Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. provides several ways for teachers to use this activity in their classrooms.

Hopes and Dreams. For this activity, students begin the year by listing what they hope to accomplish during the year or semester, such as becoming a better reader or writer. These hopes and dreams are shared with the class and used as the basis for classroom rules. For example, if a student lists a desire to learn how to read in English, the teacher can use that (along with the other students goals) to create the type of learning environment conducive to achieving that goal (i.e., needs to be quiet, time for asking questions without everyone talking at the same time). All of which proves to be a great way to begin, to not only get to know the students but also to understand their goals, allowing the teacher to guide them in reaching those objectives.

I have found the Hopes and Dreams activity useful for all settings. When used during my teaching in K-12 settings, it proved to be a useful tool to redirect students by reminding them of their goals. It also kept them working to achieve their objectives. I have also used this activity in university classrooms and found that modeling this in teacher education programs is a powerful way to teach students about goals.

One more important aspect of vision and purpose is for teachers and students to routinely reflect on progress and celebrate goals met. This supports and recognizes students working very hard to keep up with all the academic and linguistic demands of school.

Empowerment
The construct of empowerment in the SLT model focuses on students as the center of learning. They are not only an important part not only of the planning and goal setting, but are empowered to engage and achieve in their own learning, which encourages individual growth and accountability. This is especially important when working with students at different levels, requiring teachers highly skilled in methods of differentiation.

The model of teaching a content class where the teacher designs the class without regard to student's abilities and background knowledge may be futile in cases where, due to the language barrier, input in the class is not comprehensible to all students. To empower students, we must use a constructivist approach that begins by assessing the current abilities of a students and making a plan to advance their learning as much a possible. This approach means, the teacher cannot always teach or use the same materials year after year.

This student-centered instruction builds on the strengths of students and creates connections between previous and future learning. This includes building a solid foundation of understanding and mastering concepts and providing equitable, comprehensible learning opportunities. Another way to empower students is to create a support-network (Tahtinen-Pacheco, 2009) for them which include teachers, parents, and community members, all in support of the student's success in school.

When thinking about comprehensible learning opportunities, have you ever traveled abroad and listened to another language trying to figure out what was said? Often times the traveler is getting enough of the conversation to get the gist of what is being said, but not always sure of the whole conversation. This happens too often for ELs in classroom settings. Students need to have a secure understanding of what they are learning. This is provided through comprehensible input (Cummins, 1996). Students are empowered to learn when they completely understand.

–Application in University Settings
Modeling common TESL practices such as Total Physical Response (TPR) and providing comprehensible input provides support for students. In addition to including directly teaching new vocabulary, students are given time and activities to practice the vocabulary in real and meaningful ways. Activities include charades, gestures, pictures, etc.

It is important to empower students by letting them make choices in the activities they will do. I offer several opportunities for student choice during my semester long course. For example:

Choice Quiz. In small groups, I have students choose the top ten words/concepts they would like on the quiz. We gather information from each group and then rank the words/concepts and write them on the board. During the process, there is a lot of repetition and discussion about the word/concepts which provides an excellent review prior to the quiz.

Team Reports. For this activity, students in small groups are asked to teach the class on one of the topics, outlined in the course. They can choose the topic and how they are going to teach it, but must justify their choices. This activity empowers students to use their strengths to share the information.

–Application in K-12 Settings
All of the aforementioned activities work well in K-12 settings, too. Giving students choices for ways to show competence in a certain area is empowering and builds on their strengths. Giving students the power to choose creates a sense of ownership over the learning.

Choice Response Activity. Students choose one of several ways listed to show understanding of a concept. The list often includes: writing about it, creating an oral presentation, artistic representation, or any other way that would meet the lesson objective.

Language Experience Approach. This activity works very well with students who have lots of social language but struggle with literacy. This activity can be done with a group of students or individually. Students dictate the story to the teacher and the teacher writes down the story (grammatically correct) as students create or share it. The teacher then gives the written version of the story back to the student(s) to read independently. It is easier to read because the teacher is empowering the student's words.

Svitak (2012) states that the most powerful resource teachers have are the diverse imaginations, observations, opinions, hopes and dreams of students. By empowering students, you can engage them further in learning. Ultimately, empowering students is about the realization that teachers and students have a lot to learn from each other.

Conclusion
The nature of this magnificent, multifaceted field requires teachers who are willing to go beyond textbooks and make sure the student's individual needs are incorporated into the curriculum. This means differentiating lessons based on the student's background of academic knowledge, cultural perspectives, and linguistic abilities. It also includes awareness of literacy levels in both their native language and English.

To meet the needs of students, this article suggests incorporating the following fundamental approaches toward effective pedagogical practices:

- Knowing student's background and building upon student strengths.
- Keeping expectations high.
- Providing relevant, meaningful, comprehensible input.
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to practice and apply new information.

Fostering relationships in the classroom and creating a safe learning environment where all are respected and valued.

While these pedagogical approaches may be seen as promising practices in many educational areas, they become essential practices with students learning both academic content and language simultaneously. In a field where the number of students is growing exponentially, TESL teachers will be called upon to be leaders in schools and train fellow teachers in all academic areas. Using the approach of servant-leadership in TESL settings provides an operational framework for Christian teacher educators to model the traits of having an irenic spirit and to supporting each other in ways that show love, humility, and justice for all.

Using a servant leadership model to providing on-going support to our immigrant students and families will make a difference, not only in the lives of immigrants, but to those who serve. Supporting and encouraging all students and families to become part of our communities will only strengthen the fabric of the community as a whole.

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