Understanding the Challenges of Language Use

in Veterans' Transition to Civilian Life in Higher Education

by

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ABSTRACT

Transitioning into civilian life after military service is a challenging prospect. It can be difficult to find employment and maintain good mental health, and up to 70 percent of veterans experience homelessness or alcoholism. Upon discharge, many veterans pursue higher education as a way to reintegrate into civilian society. However, many studies have shown that veterans encounter multiple challenges during their attempt to reintegrate into civilian life, including anxiety, a lack of relevant skills, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other issues that may lead to communication and interaction challenges in the higher education environment. Student veterans also face challenges in the lack of common language and culture clashes due to differences between military and college culture. This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the challenges military veterans face related to language use in civilian life. The data was collected from 149 student veterans who completed a questionnaire and 11 student veterans who participated in interviews. Detailed analysis of collected data showed that student veterans experienced some challenges in language use, especially when they initially enrolled in their courses, but they seemed to have overcome challenges after spending time in the university setting. The veterans who had prior college education before joining the military seemed to have a slight advantage, having had experience using the academic language. The study also explored how student veterans chose to share their veteran status with other people in their university community. The findings showed that they strongly identified with their veteran identity and was comfortable sharing their status with others, but they also sometimes were

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reluctant to share their military experience in details because they were afraid that their

peers would not understand.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, my dad who passed away before I finished my dissertation, to my mom who always kept me in her prayers and whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears, and to my brothers and sisters.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends and Islamic center family who have supported me throughout the process.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my wonderful wife, son, and daughter for being there for me throughout the entire doctorate program. All of you have been my best cheerleaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher learning in the United States (US) are seeking ways to help student veterans deal with transitioning from military to civilian life. In some ways, the military environment prepares veterans to handle challenges in life related to commitment, resilience, and teamwork. For instance, Osborne (2014) argued that the military culture instills teamwork, collaboration, problem-solving, mission-driven commitment, and resilience, which are skills that can help veterans in many areas of civilian life.

However, transition after military service is, without a doubt, challenging, as the specialist expertise and skillsets acquired during military service do not always map onto the demands of everyday life and regular employment (Ahern et al., 2015). Some veterans experience difficulties in finding suitable employment and maintaining good mental health while experiencing homelessness, excessive alcohol use, and crime (Dougherty, 2015). For example, according to Milliken, Auchterlonie, and Hoge (2007), a considerable number of veterans, as high as 67 to 70 percent, are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which raises their stress levels and makes it difficult for them to carry out many everyday functions.

According to Swick et al. (2015), PTSD involves different features such as challenges in language use in fear regulation and other emotional responses and challenges in language use in maintaining cognitive control. As a result, the transition to civilian culture can result in the sense of alienation on the part of the veterans (DiRamio et al., 2008).

Brown and Gross (2011) pointed out that upon their discharge from the service, many veterans choose to pursue higher education as a way to reintegrate into civilian society and find a new professional path. Higher education provides a viable option for integrating veterans back into civilian society after they complete their service. However, the higher education learning environment requires specific skills, knowledge, and social capital for students to achieve their desired academic goals. Adapting to the behavioral patterns and language of higher education institutions often provides additional obstacles that veterans are forced to overcome (DeCoster, 2018; Stebleton & Soria, 2012).

Many studies have shown that veterans encounter multiple challenges in language use during their attempt to reintegrate into civilian life (Wands, 2013), including anxiety, a lack of relevant skills, coping difficulties, inability to grasp abstract thoughts, and difficulties in expressing themselves (Houle, 1964, as cited in Byrne, 1988). Student veterans also experience a range of mental health issues unique to their service experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and other issues that may lead to communication and interaction challenges in language use in the higher education environment. A majority of the mental health challenges in language use experienced by veterans stem from increased exposure to combat situations for long periods of time. In addition, the challenges in language use also result from substance abuse and psychological symptoms resulting from their combat trauma.

A study done by Howe and Shpeer (2019) showed that suicide rates were high among the veterans, with as many as 20 veterans committing suicide each day in the United States. Student veterans also face language use challenges in language use while in higher education learning environments, especially the lack of common language and

understanding that hinders the development and formation of self-identity. In addition, student veterans also experience culture clashes when they join higher education institutions due to differences between military and college culture.

In dealing with the challenges in language use and self-identity formation, veterans relate their multiple identities to each other as students, vets, older students, and parents among others and then find a way to make it work despite the differences between military and college culture. A number of studies have established the connection between language use and the development of self-identity, especially in culturally diverse environments (Moore, 2019; Villegas-Torres & Mora-Pablo, 2018). According to Moore (2019), language use is more than just a mode of communication; it can convey culture, including acting as a repository for all the collective knowledge and experiences of people, society, or a nation. The lack of a common language or understanding results in challenges in language use when it comes to developing and forming self-identity. According to Villegas-Torres and Mora-Pablo (2018), language is intrinsically related to an individual's identification with a culture or collection of people. In the study, Villegas-Torres and Mora-Pablo (2018) further looked at how speakers project themselves with an identified target social group using a certain speech behavior to receive reinforcement.

As a result of the different challenges in language use they experience, veterans often find it hard to relate their multiple identities to each other while navigating their new social identity as civilians and students. According to Rovira (2008), identity refers to the characteristics associated with an individual. In linguistics, identity refers to an individual's identification as a speaker of one or more languages. In socialization and

language use, the linguistic identity forms part—and often a significant part—of an individual's overall identity (Rassokha, 2010) and plays a key role in cross cultural communication, especially in learning environments, and influences student veterans' identity development as civilians.

However, research on veterans and their transition to college life is scant; few empirical studies have investigated their challenging experiences in college life (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). A deeper understanding of what veterans face in their transition to civilian life, in higher education, in particular, can assist new veterans in overcoming these challenges in language use. Therefore, the current mixed-methods study explores and expounds on veterans' transition to civilian life in higher education.

Background of the Study

The US Department of Defense (2016) highlighted many similarities between veterans and university students, including the fact that most of them are under the age of 25, with 43.8 percent in the military and 74.5 percent at the university level in this age group. In addition, the Department of Defense (2016) showed that the majority of military members and university students are white, with 68.7 percent of them in the veteran's group and 58.6 percent in a university. However, the similarities between the two groups do not mean that they experience life in the same manner.

A number of studies (Ahern et al., 2015; Barry et al., 2012) have shown that even though student veteran enrollment in colleges is increasing at a good rate, veterans face a range of language use and identity challenges in language use in high education environments. Bond et al. (2019) looked at the increased rates of student veterans' enrollment in various higher education levels, including how well they perform

academically. The statistics show that since the 2000s, veterans have had a higher educational attainment level than the general population, with the comparison percentages showing a 54/53 percent rate (Bond et al., 2019). In addition, statistics show that student veterans have a 1.4 higher chance than other adult learners to earn a certificate or degree (Bond et al., 2019). The success of student veterans is also shown in the fact that 21 percent of veterans who earn a bachelor's degree go on to pursue a graduate degree (Bond et al., 2019). According to a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2020) report, the total number of student veterans who enrolled in higher education and received education benefits increased by 93 percent between 2009 and 2013.

The high rate of student veteran enrollment in higher education shows that the benefits continue to attract veterans to different levels of higher education. According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute website (2018), statistics on veterans' involvement in higher education showed that in 2018, over 650,000 veterans used military benefits to pursue higher education in various institutions. In 2017, 52 percent of student veterans were enrolled in bachelor's programs, 24 percent in two-year programs, 15 percent in technical, vocational, and non-degree programs, and 9 percent in graduate programs (PNPI, 2019).

A number of past studies, such as Ahern et al. (2015) and Osborne (2014) have shown that there are a range of similarities between campus learners and student veterans. However, while these student groups share many similarities, there are key differences between the two demographics (Koenig et al., 2014). According to Itzhaky et al. (2017), university students also have high levels of stress, but they are most concerned about

their grades and finishing their assignments on time. On the other hand, military members have experience dealing with formal dress codes and explicit rules about communication and behavior. Military veterans also deal with stress about PTSD, suicidal thoughts, and concerns about whether their fellow veterans will stay alive. Most non-veteran students have not faced such rules and restrictions before coming to the university (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2020).

Communication and language use are also different between the university and the military context. In the university setting, student veterans need to make use of new language norms in their interactions with others to form their new identity, sometimes while facing challenges of language use. Students have more freedom and flexibility when it comes to how they communicate or address key issues. However, the organizational structure and behavior in the military encourage a more formal top-down communication approach, with minimal to no flexibility for dissent or protest (Perkins et al., 2019). According to Koenig et al. (2014), veterans face a number of communication and language problems when they transition to civilian life as a result of experiencing "reverse culture shock."

The main objective of this study is to explore the experiences and opinions of military veterans in the university setting in order to understand the challenges in language use in their transition to civilian life.

Statement of the Problem

Howe and Hinderaker (2018) have shown that members of the US military replace personal and societal beliefs with organizational values upon joining the military organization. The adoption of deeply internalized cultural values, communication

strategies, and structured operations means that members of the military face challenges during their transition to civilian life.

In a related study, Koenig et al. (2014) supported the argument that military veterans usually experience a period of psychological adjustment before transitioning fully to civilian life. Howe and Hinderaker (2018) further argued that the majority of military veterans leave the military with conservative views and a value-laden culture. In this case, veterans may face challenges when transitioning into the more liberal culture of higher education institutions, such as colleges and universities. Conservative views espoused in the military focus on the opinion that every individual has a personal responsibility, reject the idea of big government, and support the free markets, personal liberty, traditional American values, and a strong national defense (Dunivin, 1994). On the other hand, the majority of modern campus students are liberal, meaning that they believe in equal opportunity and equality for all and that the government should play a bigger role in solving people's problems (Ince et al. 2018).

When veterans enroll in higher education to enhance their professional capabilities and compete in the job market, they experience entry into student life differently than their civilian counterparts. For example, even young veterans may have already spent years in the workforce, and they may find it hard to relate to the concerns of classmates still living at home. Veterans' challenges range from readjustment issues to recovery from mental and physical injuries (Barry et al., 2012). Although both combat and non-combat veterans exhibit transition challenges, veterans who have faced deployment in war zones or situations of strife have a higher probability of facing such challenges (Ahern et al., 2015). These challenges, such as different cultures,

organizational structures, world views, and many more, significantly impact veterans' educational outcomes compared to civilian students (Jordan, 2019).

Few studies (Ahern et al., 2015; Landrum, 2018; Howe & Shpeer, 2019) have sought to explore the challenges veterans face, and even less attention has been given to the strategies used by veterans to overcome those challenges. In previous research, veterans have voiced their challenges with the daunting bureaucracy related to higher education, particularly in the difference between the military chain of command and the organization of college and university campuses (Jordan, 2019). For example, in the academic system, students need to know whether the answers to their questions can be found in the Office of the Registrar, their assigned advisor (if one has been assigned), the library, or a myriad of other specialized offices. Therefore, some veterans reveal a sense of alienation upon starting classes (Ahern et al., 2015) and often feel overwhelmed during their first classes, as they are unaware of where to turn for help. Ultimately, veterans need support to make the transition to civilian life.

In most cases, some of the challenges combat veterans face involve relating their multiple identities to each other, including their veteran experiences and their student status. As mentioned earlier, the process of identity formation in a new environment involves both language use and socializing (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). For the student veterans at the center of this study, institutions of higher learning should put in place on-campus resources to help student veterans deal with their unique challenges in language use and formulate the new university-related aspects of their social identity.

Purpose of the Study

Student veterans face a range of challenges, including those in language use, when it comes to transitioning to civilian life in higher education. Broadening the range of tools available to veterans and their families may help reduce the stress and anxiety experienced when transitioning from military life to civilian life (Borsari et al., 2017). A deeper understanding of veterans' transition experiences, which will be shared via this research, can serve to assist new veterans in overcoming these challenges in language use (Cox, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this study is: (a) to understand the challenges in language use raised by the differences between military language and academic language in universities, and (b) to understand how combat veterans negotiate their identity as veterans in academic settings. In other words, this study seeks to explore how the different cultures between the military and university environments result in language and communication challenges in language use to military veterans, affecting their transition to civilian life and experiences in higher learning environments.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study will have implications for policy and practice. In the realm of policy, the Department of Veteran Affairs may use the findings of this study to help Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) to better assist new veterans looking to further their education. Through these findings, VR&E can potentially improve veterans' readiness to adapt to their new civilian community and improve their readiness all over university campuses. In addition, the findings can offer insights into how acquisition of the academic language help new student veterans form new and intersecting identities. In terms of practice, the findings can help administrators in higher

education better aid veterans attending university programs and assist veterans in their language socialization process in higher education. For example, the findings may suggest establishing new on-campus programs to support veterans or improving the available programs to better accommodate student veterans.

Research Questions

This research study seeks to offer insights into the ways that veterans deal with challenges in language use they face during their transition to civilian life at Arizona State University (ASU). The study is guided by the research questions below:

- What kind of challenges in language use do combat veterans experience in their language use as they transition from military to civilian life in higher education?
- How do combat veterans present their identity as veterans in academic settings?

Summary

Military veterans in higher education are a unique demographic of the student population in colleges and universities. They are currently understudied in modern research literature. However, the lack of available empirical research means that colleges and universities cannot make strongly informed policy decisions related to student services for veterans. Even though student veterans in higher education continue to perform on par with regular students (Ahern et al., 2015; Bell, 2017), there is an understanding that many veterans continue to face major challenges in language use in their journey.

Past research has indicated that student veterans face major challenges in language use compared to non-veteran students at institutions of higher learning and in transitioning to civilian life in general (Brown & Gross, 2011; Cox, 2019). Apart from the challenges in language use that combat veterans face in universities, they also face major opportunities to complete education and be integrated into society. However, their success in these opportunities depends on how they learn to communicate effectively with other members of the academic community and negotiate their complex identities so that they can be effectively integrated into the university community. Thus, this dissertation focuses on understanding the challenges in language use in veterans' transition to civilian life in higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The purpose of this chapter is two folds. First, it presents the background information on student veterans in US higher education and review of the existing literature relevant to the proposed inquiry. Then it reviews theoretical frameworks and concepts that guide the present study.

Most past studies highlight the general challenges that veterans go through as they transition from military to civilian life without focusing on their language use in higher education. In the first half this chapter, I review such studies to show what is known about such challenges and to shed light on an area where more data and information are desperately needed.

First, I provide a history of the existing military and higher education connection to provide a wide context for my research topic. The literature under this section mainly focuses on the economic, political, and cultural factors that have either assisted or hindered veterans' participation in higher education, with a focus on the role of the federal government.

Then, the chapter presents an extended review of the literature on the various features that make student veterans different from traditional students, which make them susceptible to the unique challenges. This segment also provides a general outlook on the problem before specifically discussing the challenges in language use student veterans face in higher education. Finally, the third section presents the literature relevant to the main focus of the dissertation: the challenges student veterans face, that are linked to challenges in language use in higher education and their identities as veterans.

The latter half of the chapter presents language socialization theory, the main theory that frames this study, and discusses its appropriateness to guide the current study. I also briefly discuss the role of identity in socialization and language use, as it directly relates to one of my research questions. These theoretical frameworks and concepts offer a foundation for understanding language both as a form of communication and as a tool of cultural assimilation.

Literature Review

Military and Higher Education History in the United States

Fully understanding the relationship between student veterans and higher education institutions today involves first looking at the history of the two institutions, particularly since the end of the Second World War.

Second World War and the Initial G.I. Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944)

Borsari et al. (2017) and Smith-Osborne (2012) have argued that the connection between the military and higher education institutions mainly started during the Second World War, when even the academic community showed great patriotism. As the war progressed, university research departments got involved in developing weapons for the military, representing closer cooperation between the two entities that had never been seen before.

Under the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, the collaboration between institutions of higher learning and the military resulted in the promotion of innovations in agriculture and the mechanical arts (Abrams, 1989). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the G.I. Bill, was signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt (1933-1945) during the final stages of the Second World War (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Servicemen's

Readjustment Act of 1944). The bill was meant to motivate the high number of veterans returning home from the war to attend institutions of higher learning as a way of avoiding a flood of ex-military in the job market as unskilled laborers (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009).

According to Jones (2017), the passing of the G.I. Bill saw major improvements in the number of veterans registering for higher education: 49 percent by 1947, which was higher than the earlier 15 percent rate. However, the effect of the G.I. Bill has been debated for a long time as to whether or not it helped veterans in particular or helped to alter the contours of higher education in the country as a whole. Jones (2017) argued that the implementation of the bill allowed people who would have never had a chance to attend higher education institutions to receive a university degree, forever altering the course of veterans' lives and higher education as a whole.

The Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1955-1975).

The Servicemen Readjustment Bill was passed in 1952 by the US Congress, with the aim of providing government support to the veterans returning from the Korean War (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1952). The bill covered the cost of tuition in the majority of the country's institutions of higher learning while mandating that the veterans utilize the benefits within 10 years. A review of the bill in the 1950s showed that it did not motivate veterans to attend higher education, but the review failed to look at what other challenges in language use could have led to these outcomes (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944). Congress passed the Vietnam G.I. Bill, also known as the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act, in 1966 and focused on limiting the benefits offered to Vietnam War veterans who served between 1964 and 1975 (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley,

2010; Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966). During this time, there was a high prevalence of antiwar sentiments in many institutions of higher learning, which meant that veterans often felt targeted and unwelcome (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). The hostility and anti-Vietnam War sentiment were some of the many environmental factors preventing veterans from either enrolling in higher education or finishing their degrees.

Later legislation reduced the educational provisions provided to veterans. The passing of the Veterans Educational Assistance Program by Congress in 1977 (Dortch, 2012) and the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1985 (Mercer & Skinner, 2008) further reduced veterans benefits associated with higher education, such as coverage of tuition costs and monthly living stipends. The reduction of benefits reduced access for veterans in higher education, making it harder for the group to afford higher education. However, the passing of the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1985 provided extended benefits to the veterans from the National Guard and reserves to aid them in transitioning smoothly to civilian life. However, the US Department of Veteran Affairs (2011) noted that the benefits provided through these various rounds of legislation were not for all veterans, as the awards depended on the location of deployment and length of service.

In the instances of these three pieces of legislation, it is clear that political and legislative factors played a key role in determining the benefits provided, which affected the number of veterans who could access higher education. In addition, the increased promotion of veterans' education also has had major impacts on society socially, economically, and technologically, as educated veterans make for a useful labor force helping to build the economy (Harrell & Berglass, 2012).

Post-9/11 G.I. Bill of 2009

The US Congress passed the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) in 2005, an update of the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1984 (Gumbel, 1987). According to Steele, Salcedo, and Coley (2010), the passing of the new bill focused on providing similar benefits to both active-duty service members and reservists called to active duty after September 11, 2001. However, the benefits provided by the government were not sufficient to cover the cost of higher education, leading to many challenges in language use for student veterans. For instance, the majority of student veterans struggled with financial issues related to covering daily expenses, something that was not factored into the earlier bills.

Congress passed another bill, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill in 2009, in an attempt to fix the problem (Dortch, 2012). The passing of this bill was different from the earlier ones in that it increased benefits to veterans instead of reducing them (Caspers & Ackerman, 2012). In addition, the bill was also beneficial to veterans because it offered different benefits such as covering tuition and fees to many veterans, including those who fought in Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2014) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2011).

The majority of the studies reviewed above mainly focused on looking at the integration of veterans into higher education from a legal or political viewpoint, noting how government support or the lack of it has influenced how veterans access higher education since World War II. The next section examines the unique characteristics of student veterans.

From History to Present

The end of the Second World War in 1945 marked the passing of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which prompted veterans to arrive on college campuses in large numbers, as high as 49 percent, due to the educational benefits included in the legislation (Jones, 2017). More recently, according to Radford (2009), the United States (US) Census Bureau reported in 2006 that 1.1 million military veterans enrolled in higher education during the 2001-2002 school year, while in 2007-2008, 875,000, or 4 percent of the enrolled undergraduates, were military veterans. The process of veterans enrolling further continued after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks and large-scale military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, which led to the passing of the veteran-focused post-9/11 G.I. Bill. This legislation further encouraged military veterans to enroll in higher education, with numbers as high as 3.6 million enrolling by the academic year 2019 (Morris et al., 2019).

Even though military veterans have been attending higher education campuses in large numbers for a long time, since the end of the Second World War, many institutions of higher learning such as universities and community colleges continue to struggle to understand the challenges in language use veterans face, as well as how to handle them (Morris et al. 2019). Some reports in the literature, such as Morris et al. (2019) and Jones (2017) have suggested that the dropout rate among student veterans within their first year of college is as high as 88 percent (Borsari et al., 2017).

Student Veterans and Their Experiences

Unique Characteristics of Student Veterans

Student veterans can be included in the broad category of non-traditional students who are in the higher education system after the "standard" age of 18 and may have children, work full-time, or be veterans. The main understanding in this case is that student veterans are different from traditional higher education students when it comes to demographics, experiences, language use, and other key factors. In particular, Borsari et al. (2017) pointed out that veterans in higher education institutions are quite different from the typical student, including the fact that 73 to 79 percent are male, 60 percent are Caucasian, 18 percent are African American, 13 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are Asian (p. 168). According to the US Census Bureau (2018), of just the current undergraduate college student population, 52.9 percent are non-Hispanic White, 20.9 percent are Hispanic, 15.1 percent are Black, and 7.6 percent are Asian, while graduate students are 61.2 percent White non-Hispanic, 13.6 percent Hispanic, 12.3 percent Black, and 11.2 percent Asian. In addition, their study showed that the majority of veterans tend to be older than typical college students, with only 20 percent aged between 17 and 23 years, the typical demographic at universities and community colleges. Moreover, women continue to be a majority on college campuses at 54.9 percent of undergraduate students and 59.8 percent of graduate students. Only 29.3 percent of undergraduate college students are attending two-year institutions. In addition, veterans are 47 percent more likely to be married, 47 percent are more likely to have children, and 15 percent are more likely to be single parents compared to traditional college students (Borsari et al., 2017).

A number of past studies such as Nicassio and Saral (1978) and Smith-Osborne (2012) focus on showing the key differences between student veterans and traditional students in higher education learning environments. Nicassio and Saral (1978) argued that non-traditional learners interact with university language and culture differently than traditional students. In their study on service members, Borsari et al. (2017) looked at the challenges in language use this population of students goes through during integration into higher education, noting how their unique characteristics make it hard for them to adapt successfully, as they are simultaneously reintegrating in civilian life while undertaking higher education.

According to Smith-Osborne (2012), veterans also view traditional students as "kids" who have a less structured lifestyle than veterans have experienced in the military. Student veterans also differ from traditional college students due to their social connections and identity, mental health, physical disabilities, and redeployment risk (Smith-Osborne, 2012). Student veterans often report difficulty connecting socially with traditional students who are less likely to have firmly established vocational, social, and family functions (Blaauw-Hara, 2016).

These differences make it hard for student veterans to identify with the college lifestyle, further challenging their ability to finish their degrees, and some of them eventually drop out (Smith-Osborne, 2012). Kim and Cole (2013) provided a comparison of characteristics of student veterans in higher education with non-veteran students in key areas such as forming relationships, class preparation, discussing grades with instructors, learning on their own, and so on. The study first looked at students' relationships with others and among themselves while at the university grounds. For both veteran and non-

veteran students, forming good relationships on campus plays a key role in successfully engaging in campus life and academics. The study showed that a higher number of student veterans (61 percent) noted that they have friendly and supportive relationships with faculty and staff, a lower number of non-veteran students at 54 percent felt the same way (Kim & Cole, 2013). However, when it comes to relationships with other students, student veterans had lower figures at 58 percent who reported having a friendly and supportive relationship with fellow students compared to the high number of 62 percent among the non-veteran students (Kim & Cole, 2013). The percentages showed that student veterans mainly experience supportive and friendly relationships with faculty and administrators, while non-veteran students experience supportive and friendly relationships with fellow students.

Difference between Military and College Life

Past studies have shown that student veterans are different from traditional students when transitioning from military service to a higher education environment (Ahern et al., 2015; Astin, 2011; Howe & Shpeer, 2019). According to Howe and Shpeer (2019), US military and higher education institutions have many demographic differences and cultures. For instance, the US military has strict rules that must be obeyed and followed at all times in order to avoid punishments or consequences. For instance, the military rules formalized by the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibit military members from speaking out against nationally elected officials, including the president, senators, or members of Congress. Breaking this rule automatically results in forfeiture of pay, dishonorable discharge, or imprisonment. On the other hand, college students are not restricted from commenting or speaking against any person, elected or otherwise. In

addition, the students are also encouraged to engage in critical thinking and discussions, where different opinions may be expressed. Many student veterans are surprised by the fact that students in college environments have the freedom of speech to say anything they want while they have been restricted in the military (Ahern et al., 2015). As a result, student veterans are not always sure of the kind of language to use and may even be offended upon hearing traditional students using a certain kind of language.

Howe and Shpeer (2019) further described other organizational structures found in the military but not in institutions of higher learning, such as enforcing military values, hierarchical communication, the requirement for an impeccable experience, and punctuality. The rules in the military create organizationally constructed behavior instead of socially constructed behavior. The same is not found in university environments as students live with minimal supervision or rules.

In a related study, Gallois and Giles (2015) mentioned how the two different learned behaviors end up creating two unique cultures or sets of social norms, with each establishment designed for the purpose of the respective group. In this case, student veterans may find themselves increasingly bonding together, while traditional students stay together as they share a common way to communicate. Gallois and Giles (2015) further pointed out that the convergence of the individuals to the different groups is determined by the social, cognitive, and psychological factors. In most cases, individuals are attracted to a group that communicates or uses language in the same manner as tehy do, explaining the reason for creating subgroups based on similarities within the same learning environment.

On the positive side, higher education can allow veterans to reintegrate into civilian life, giving them social and professional satisfaction and boosting their sense of self. Lim et al. (2016) found that military experiences offer veterans avenues to display discipline, leadership skills, and a sense of pride in their contribution to society. In this context, Dougherty (2015) found that while veterans are assimilating professional knowledge, they are also being socialized with and by their peers and instructors on the social and cultural values of professionalism, teamwork, and discipline in the university setting. Moon and Schma (2011) studied the different institutional programs, policies, and support agencies that can help student veterans to cope with the numerous challenges in language use they face, such as financial issues, psychological problems, and mental issues. The main finding put forward by Astin (2011) and Moon and Schma (2011) is that the majority of challenges in language use student veterans face are a result of a lack of help and support from colleagues and the university administration.

Organizational support has also been noted as a key component of enhancing student veterans' experience in institutions of higher learning. Richardson et al. (2015) and O'Herrin (2011) conducted studies on the centrality of organizational support for student veterans. For example, Richardson et al. (2015) discussed the use of degree mapping as a strategy to aid student veterans. The strategy involves higher education advisors and counselors providing students with information and concrete guidance on how to complete their degrees. In addition, the advisors also counsel students on the best way to follow the programs and what is required of them in the higher education learning environment. The main understanding is that the degree-mapping strategy provides student veterans with a connection between the military culture and the higher education

culture. These connections happen through enabling the student veterans to learn and understand the higher education learning culture and assimilate it with the military culture. The findings of a study by O'Herrin (2011) also supported incorporating organizational resources to guide student veterans on the best way to take advantage of the higher education environment. In this case, the main understanding was that most student veterans do not benefit from the available resources as a result of lack of exposure or lack of knowledge. Both studies highlight the need to provide student veterans with resources to cope with the challenges in language use in an environment different from the military culture and environment they have been immersed in.

Challenges Faced in the Higher Education Environment

For veterans whose life experiences are far removed from those of civilians, even other non-traditional students, the higher education process is even more fraught with anxiety and stress. Livingston and Bauman (2013) pointed out that student veterans often face additional challenges re-enrolling and reintegrating into the higher education environment after the redeployment process. Many studies have shown that veterans encounter multiple challenges during their attempt to reintegrate into civilian life (Wand, 2013), including anxiety, a lack of relevant skills, coping difficulties, inability to grasp abstract thoughts, and difficulties in expressing themselves (Houle, 1964, as cited in Byrne, 1988).

Citing work from Adkins et al. (1999), Finn (2010) defined three types of stress in veterans' resettlement/re-transitioning process: migration stress, acculturation stress, and traumatic stress. Migration stress is the move from one place to another, stress related to the migratory experience and the necessary acculturation process occurring in adaptation

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to the new community (Bustamante et al., 2018). Challenges associated with migration to a new community have been found to increase the risk of mental health problems (Kartal & Kiropoulos, 2016).

Acculturation stress is the difficulty related to coping in a new cultural environment, although most empirical evidence has concentrated on exploring the acculturative process of the individual without exploring the impact of the host society, which is key in understanding the full process of acculturation and stress associated with migration (Schwartz et al., 2010). Dougherty (2015) found that socialization issues further compound the challenges in student veterans' experience, and he suggested that veterans should be offered tailored opportunities for socializing in addition to counseling and mentoring programs. Similarly, Larson (1990) noted that veterans were a "distinct group of students in the colleges' database but not as a recognizable group in the classroom or on campus" (p. 39) because they were not reliant on "interpersonal relationships with other students" and they were "unusually individualistic" (p. 139).

Student veterans also experience a range of mental health issues unique to their service experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and other issues that may lead to communication and interaction challenges in language use in the higher education environment. Veterans who have been exposed to combat situations and have experienced traumatic stress in their military careers often exhibit problematic behaviors as they cope with trauma, including both substance abuse and psychological symptoms related to their combat trauma (Barry et al., 2014). In particular, suicide rates are high among veterans; the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (2016) reported that at least 20 veterans commit suicide daily in the United States. In

addition, Howe and Shpeer (2019) found that majority of the veterans who committed suicide felt cut off from society. According to a qualitative study by Howe and Shpeer (2019), when veterans fail to interact with civilian members of the society after deployment, the majority of the affected individuals usually experience discomfort in educational, intrapersonal, professional, and interpersonal areas of life.

Trauma-related cognitive difficulties may also form a part of student assimilation challenges, and instructors and on-campus offices should deal sensitively with such manifestations of trauma (Ahern et al., 2015). Several studies (Ahern et al., 2015; Landrum, 2018; Shpeer, 2019) have shown that veterans face all these stressors when entering a higher education learning environment. According to Canfield and Weiss (2015), student veterans' mental health issues can lead to consequences such as physical fights, drug abuse, and confrontations, further alienating them from traditional college students. In most cases, trauma-related cognitive difficulties make it hard for student veterans to have a smooth learning experience in higher education institutions, leading to high dropout rates.

Challenges in Language Use Faced by Student Veterans

A number of studies have established the connection between language use and the development of self-identity, especially in culturally diverse environments (Moore, 2019; Villegas-Torres & Mora-Pablo, 2018). According to Moore (2019), language is more than just a mode of communication; it can convey culture, acting as a repository for all the collective knowledge and experiences of people, society, or a nation. The lack of a common language or understanding results in problemswhen it comes to developing and forming self-identity. According to Villegas-Torres and Mora-Pablo (2018), language is

intrinsically related to an individual's identification with a culture or collection of people. In the study, Villegas-Torres and Mora-Pablo (2018) further looked at how speakers project themselves with an identified target social group using a certain speech behavior to receive reinforcement.

Veterans experience culture clashes when they transition from military culture to college culture, which influence their learning, language use, and interaction (Shpeer, 2019). For instance, active and veteran members of the military view language as contributing to their identity since it provides a sense of cohesion and unity (Shpeer, 2019). Veterans often express displaced dissent or direct verbal disagreement with non-veteran learners and teachers (Ahern et al., 2015). Nicassio and Saral (1978) pointed out that veteran standard communication is direct, exact, respectful, and necessary and that their perceptions of these communicative values can impact how they talk and process conversations with others. Civilian communication, by contrast, seems to veterans to be slower, and the focus is initially centered on relationship-building and trust (Ahern et al., 2015) rather than content. However, the views on veteran language use in this case are based on the veterans' viewpoint, which sees military language use and communication as the norm as opposed to the normal civilian use of language

A qualitative study by Howe and Shpeer (2019) identified three major themes regarding the communicative processes of military veterans entering the higher education environment: culture clash, perspective-taking, and self-silencing. The three themes of culture clashes, perspective-taking, and self-silencing, are discussed in detail below.

Howe and Shpeer (2019) revealed that the majority of student veterans described interactions with traditional college students as a culture clash with the military values

they had learned. A number of past studies have also stressed the important role that culture plays when it comes to helping students attain their higher educational goals. For instance, Jacobs (2014) highlighted the key influence that language has on increasing the bond between the student and the learning institution. In effect, culture plays a key role in helping to connect the student and the learning institution in question. Poth, Riedel, and Luth (2015) pointed out that students want to learn and understand the higher education language and culture and seek new ways to grow with it.

However, even though the majority of student veterans noted that they reacted positively to encounters in higher education that challenged their previous beliefs, sometimes the encounters can be negative and confrontational. For example, one student veteran noted how he walked to a door and saw "a communism socialist club flier," which shocked him, as the same thing could not happen in the military (Howe & Shpeer, 2019, p. 6). However, a negative confrontation was avoided as the veteran understood that college students enjoy more freedom of speech on campuses as compared to the military. In addition, the student veterans were also surprised to see that instructors and students could talk at the same time, which was unheard of in military settings. Other respondents noted that they could not relate with civilian students mainly due to challenges in language use, such as misunderstandings that resulted when student veterans carried the military's jargon and acronym-laden language into the university setting, language the majority of the students in the university do not recognize.

The second aspect mentioned by Howe and Shpeer (2019) is perspective-taking. Interactions in cross-cultural environments require each person to plan their own moves in anticipation of what their partner's moves are likely to be, which involves extensive

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assumptions about what the others know, want, and believe. Successful perspective-taking involves the use of social comparison theory, which shows that interactions should involve people evaluating their personal beliefs by comparing them with the abilities and beliefs of other people (Surtees, Butterfill, & Apperly, 2012).

In a study by Howe and Shpeer (2019), participants tried to understand their communication exchanges from another person's perspective to deal with challenges in language use. In different instances, student veterans noted that they experienced non-confrontational communication as they focused more on the new culture's desire to be intact. The majority of the respondents noted that the most important part of the whole higher education learning process was learning how to voice their opinion and listen to other opinions without getting confrontational (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). However, the study also established that veterans who suffer from PTSD faced the most challenges when it came to the issue of perspective-taking, as they did not know or understand how to deal with their PTSD. Gasiorek and Ebesu Hubbard (2017) conducted a systematic review study to establish how essential it is to take another person's perspective during the communication process. The study showed that communication is the process of sharing or making common personal ideas, taking the conceptual content in one mind and activating it in another. The key point of the process involves the formation of ideas regarding what is going on in other people's minds.

The third communicative process mentioned by Howe and Shpeer (2019) was self-silencing. The process of self-silencing, especially for depressed or stressed persons, involves the suppression of certain thoughts, feelings, and actions that an individual thinks might contradict the other party's wishes (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). In most cases,

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people employ silence to avoid conflicts, maintain a relationship, or ensure their physiological or physical safety (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). However, it is also important to note that the act of self-silencing means that the affected persons may feel a loss of self and a sense of being lost in their lives. Ladha et al. (2018) discussed the issue of self-silencing as a result of a combination of factors such as discomfort with a question or conversation, uncertainty about the meaning of a particular word, or apprehension about the reasons for a question or conversation.

Self-silencing is a key theme in understanding the language use challenges student veterans face in the higher education learning environment. A study by Hayes and Matthes (2014) pointed out that non-traditional students often feel silenced by the university system's practices, norms, and language. Howe and Shpeer (2019) cited three main reasons students self-silence among student veterans: fear of punishment, fear their words will sound inappropriate, and concern it is not their responsibility to act. Howe and Shpeer (2019) also mentioned that veterans are accustomed to the hierarchical structure of the military and the emphasis on top-down communication in the military. The majority of student veterans noted that they had always been told what and how to dress, what to say and how to say it as well as other rules. These rules apparently were not followed at the institutions of higher learning, so they were not sure what the accepted behavioral scripts were in their new context. For instance, one respondent noted that they always felt like correcting the behaviors other students were engaged in, like disrespecting teachers (based on their military background), but they held back because that was not one of their responsibilities.

Peer Support Groups

Student veterans face challenges in interacting with traditional students due to physical, emotional, and social traumas suffered while deployed. However, according to Hu (2010), such challenges can be mitigated through encouraging peer interactions and high levels of social engagement, which lead to student persistence and a reduction in student dropout rates. The formation of peer support groups by faculties or departments in higher education institutions can play a key role in influencing the combat veterans' sense of belonging as well as intentionally increasing peer interaction to prevent feelings of isolation (Blackwell-Starnes, 2018). However, it is also important to note that combat students face a harder time connecting with traditional students due to differences in age, maturity, and experiences. Despite this setback, combat veterans use peer support groups as a survival tool that aids in their blending in while on campus and finding information that can help with their navigation.

A Summary of Studies Used in the Current Research

Across the limited research surrounding the transition of student veterans from military life to the higher education environment, a number of themes have come up to denote how they face challenges in communicating, especially with traditional college students. Some of the themes reviewed in this literature review chapter include culture clash, perspective-taking, self-silencing, the difference between military and university environments, and challenges in self-identity development among student veterans. The literature review also showed that most of the language use problems faced by the student veterans originate from the fact that the military and institutions of higher learning have different organizational structures, behaviors, and social norms.

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As mentioned previously, there is limited research on challenges in language use affecting student veterans in their transition to the university learning environment, and the field needs further research. In an attempt to show the existing literature on the subject and also draw attention to existing gaps in research, a specific literature review is provided for the main studies chosen for the literature review, especially on the language use themes. The section only includes the studies that relate directly to the research topic in an effort to show the existing research gaps in the literature.

Ahern et al. (2015) examined the challenges in language use of veterans transitioning from combat duty in Afghanistan and Iraq to civilian life and their different approaches to reconnection. The study uses a qualitative research study using in-depth interviews with 24 veterans. The findings of the study show how the study examined different overarching themes from the primary data, including military as a family, normal is alien, and searching for a new normal. Barry et al. (2014) examined the life experiences of student service members/veterans in higher education institutions. The study used a systematic qualitative review of the literature and found that as compared to civilians, veterans portray a higher rate of health risk behaviors and psychological symptoms and personal and educational adjustment difficulties. Borsari et al. (2017) investigated the challenges for reintegration that student service members/ veterans go through while on campus. A systematic qualitative review of the literature methodology was used in the study. The findings of the study showed that student service members encounter personal and environmental challenges when transitioning from the military to higher education. Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) assessed the institutional structure and student veterans to determine how they are designed to serve their needs at military-

friendly institutions, using an empirical qualitative study methodology. The findings of the study show that American colleges and universities differ in how they address student veterans as per their organizational framework categorized into different variables such as department, level and specialization. In his study, Dougherty (2015) determined how the military experience of student veterans affects their higher education experiences. The author used a qualitative methodology as well as using interviews as a data collection method. The findings of the study showed different ways in how military experience affected the education experiences of student veterans: (a) veterans were experienced with group collaboration; (b) veterans held high expectations of themselves; (c) veterans were organized and task-oriented; (d) veterans are experienced learners, and (e) veterans had the experience and ability to work with others.

In another related study, Griffin and Gilbert (2015) used Schlossberg's transition framework to determine the different barriers and institutional support structures for student veterans in higher education[1]. The study used a qualitative study methodology using narratives from student veterans. The findings of the study reveal how organizational structures help student veterans to develop navigational strategies as well as organizational actions and policies that pose transitional challenges. Howe and Shpeer (2019) investigated the communicative challenges in language use of student veterans in the university using the communication accommodation theory. The qualitative research methodology was used in this study in conjunction with using interviews as a data

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[1] Schlossberg defined a transition as any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. It is important to note that perception plays a key role in transitions as an event or non-event meets the definition of a transition only if it is so defined by the individual experiencing it.

collection method. The findings of the study showed that a lack of adequate models are used in understanding student-veteran transition experiences, especially in community colleges. Jones (2017) examined veterans' transition process and experiences attending community colleges using a qualitative research study methodology and interviews as a data collection method. The study's findings showed that a lack of adequate models are used in understanding student-veteran transition experiences, especially in community colleges. Lim et al. (2016) examined the use of the engineering course as the pathway to student veterans' reintegration into higher education and civilian society. A qualitative phenomenological study methodology was used and combined with interviews for data collection purposes. The findings showed that a clear connection was identified between prior military assignments and the new professional goal of the veterans of becoming an engineer. Poth et al. (2015) examined student perspectives and framed them into the higher education institutional review policy process. A qualitative research study methodology was used as well as questionnaires for data collection. The findings showed a lack of focus when it comes to using assessment to inform instruction and a lack of clarity in the purposes of assessment. Smith-Osborne (2012) designed a student veteran project study to help in supporting resilience in an academic setting for student veterans and soldiers as an aspect of community integration. A qualitative research study methodology was used. The findings showed that the intervention project was connected to the protective mechanisms of support network density, higher mood, and resilience.

Ou and Gu (2018) investigated the use of the theory of language socialization and identity in intercultural communication by investigating the experiences of Chinese students in a transnational university in China. The authors used a qualitative research

study methodology using interviews, and the authors used observational data to help in answering the research questions. The study showed asymmetrical power between Chinese students and English native speakers in conversations, resulting in the separation of the two groups on campus and pushing the Chinese students into a vulnerable ESL speaker position. Lønsmann (2017) examined language and socializing as a catalyst for change by looking at language socialization and norm negotiation in a transient multilingual workplace. A qualitative research study methodology using interviews and observational data was employed in the study. The study findings showed that English speakers in globalized working settings had feelings of exclusion due to the failure to socialize in the given culture as a result of limitations in language.

Theoretical Framework: Language Socialization

According to Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015), language socialization refers to the "process by which individuals acquire, reproduce, and transform the knowledge and competence that enable them to participate appropriately within specific communities of language users" (p. 319). As a theoretical framework, language socialization provides a key approach to understanding how linguistic and cultural competence are made up through daily interactions within communities of practice. Through the lens of human development and linguistic anthropology, language socialization is both the process of socialization through the use of language as well as socializing to use language. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (2008), language socialization as a framework involves understanding the potential of embodied communication in engaging novices in apprehending and taking note of both familiar and novel ways of thinking, feeling, and acting with others. In other words, the concept looks at the desires and expectations of

societal members on their children and other novices to display appropriate forms of sociality and competence. For a long time, scholars have focused on looking at the process of language acquisition and language competence from two major viewpoints, both focused on children: as located in a child's innate structures or as a product of verbal input from the child's environment. The current study takes language socialization out of the context of children's experiences and applies it to veterans as novices in the higher education environment.

Use of Language Socialization in Language Acquisition and Transition to a New Environment

Different researchers have studied the use of language socialization as a theory to explain and understand language acquisition and transition to a new environment. For instance, Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015) viewed the process that helps to make visible the connections between language and culture in the process of learning and teaching. This cross-cultural perspective takes into consideration the existence of both biological and psychological attributes in the learning processes, while at the same time acknowledging considerable variations due to cultural factors and socio-historical conditions (Sook Lee & Bucholtz, 2015). The use of language socialization to understand the acquisition of language and transition to a new environment also involves paying close attention to the process of socializing within culturally meaningful learning spaces and the way the practices can be combined or kept apart across different kinds of universities as a learning space. In the current study, the idea of culture relates to the topic through the understanding that the military and the university learning environment represent

different cultures, meaning "the ideas, customs and social behaviors of a particular group of people or society" (Ou & Gu, 2018, p. 420).

A study by Lønsmann (2017) examined the concept of norm negotiation, where linguistic norms can be viewed as social conventions for language use. Lønsmann (2017) viewed norms as created under the influence of a range of different factors and environments, such as societal norms, ideologies, institutional norms, and group norms. This study explained how external factors play a key role in shaping an individual's language and social identity in a given context. Another study by Ou and Gu (2018) expounded on the theory of language socialization by exploring the identity construction of Chinese students during their interaction with international peers in the university learning environment. The study was conducted in China, and the context is important in that the study focused on looking at how foreign students coped with different challenges faced during the process of integration into the learning spaces. The study showed an asymmetrical power connection between Chinese students and their native English-speaking peers when it comes to conversations, which leads to the separation of the two groups in the university environment and pushes the Chinese students into a vulnerable speaker position as English language learners. The theory of language socialization helps to explain interaction and communication between individuals of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Ou & Gu, 2018). The theory is useful in understanding how groups with different cultures and languages form social identities, especially when it comes to their social and cultural positioning, even when they operate in the same context or environments. As mentioned above, culture relates to the study in that it means "the ideas, customs and social behaviors of a particular group of people or society" (p. 420).

In the context of the present study, the military and the universities' learning spaces represent two different cultures.

Duff (2010) offered an explanation regarding the topic by looking at how newcomers to an academic culture learn to take part successfully in the oral and written discourse and related practices of that discourse community. In addition, the author also looked at how the interaction of the newcomers with their peers, instructors, tutors, and others facilitates the process of acquiring expertise, confidence, and a sense of authority over different practices over time. According to Duff (2010), the language socialization perspective views development as culturally centered, mediated, and replete with social, cultural, and political meanings, in conjunction with propositional or ideational meanings carried or indexed by different linguistic, textual, and paralinguistic forms. The core theoretical premise of the language socialization theory is that language is acquired through interactions with other people who are more proficient in the language or discourse in question and its associated cultural practices. In addition, the proficient persons also help novices with explicit and implicit mentoring regarding the normative and appropriate uses of language according to the community members (Duff, 2010). The language socialization theory also shows that learners gain more than language knowledge when participating in new discourse communities. They also gain other kinds of information or cultural knowledge regarding ideologies, identities, affective orientations, and linguistic and nonlinguistic content.

The Appropriateness of Language Socialization as a Theoretical Framework

The current study employs language socialization as the theoretical framework, considering language both as a form of communication and as a tool of cultural

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assimilation (Guardado, 2018). Language socialization theories evaluate the connection between cultural and linguistic processes in human development (Howard, 2014). The underlying premise of language socialization is that socialization involves the interface of language and culture. And human development can be traced to the interface between language and social learning (Garrett, 2008) to understand children's development, since they learn language and social norms simultaneously in their homes and in the educational context. The present study is grounded in the theory of language socialization, which emanates from the idea that language is a critical medium in the development of social and cultural knowledge and sensibilities (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). Individuals make meaning from cultural symbols or contexts, indicating the broader socialization context of language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012, p. 2).

Language socialization theories have also been used to understand how adults come to understand societal norms and expectations, accept society's beliefs, and be aware of societal values (Garrett, 2008). The armed forces environment forces military recruits to live by the forces' established values and regulations, such as loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity, and personal courage (Bell, 2017), which are intended to shape military members for war specifically. According to Howe and Hinderaker (2018), the social behavior exhibited by the veterans after leaving the military is artificial, meaning that it is not a result of a social construction but emanates from an organizational construction. In the case of this study, the military creates a different culture from that of universities or colleges. According to Wolf et al. (2008), the different learned group behaviors lead to the creation of two unique cultures or sets of social norms, which I will label military culture and university culture.

In addition, theories of language socialization also helps understanding how individuals form new identities in new environments and how language use and interactions with other individuals helps in this process. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (2008), the socialization of learners in any learning environment takes place both in and through language by means of interactions with others. The main understanding, in this case, is that language use and interactions with other learners play a key role in the formation of new identities. In the same case, it is also important to note how different resources provided in the learning environment play a key role in helping the new learners form their identity.

Theories of acculturation and socialization have been proposed to identify challenges in language use veterans face in their transition to civilian life (Cooper et al., 2018; Schecter & Bayley, 2004). In the context of veterans' multi-faceted needs during their transition from military life to university life, language socialization theory offers a unique combination of social and cultural dimensions since it encompasses how an individual acquires knowledge and then uses that knowledge to advance their learning over their lifetime. This process is bidirectional: On one hand, a mentor or teacher imparts knowledge, which socializes the recipient; on the other hand, the student absorbs, processes, and reflects their knowledge back into their environment, thus changing the environment itself. Therefore, socialization and changes to the environment occur at the same time (Burdelski & Howard, 2020).

Language socialization theory is important in understanding the formation and shifting of social identities (Lønsmann, 2017). Language socialization helps explain how norms are context-bound, since knowing the norms of a specific context or environment

can form part of an individual's communicative competency. As a theoretical frame, language socialization shows that linguistic and cultural learning and development can be better understood as fundamentally contextualized and interactionally emergent processes. In the case of this study, language is viewed within interactions as the main symbolic tool for developing and expressing linguistic and cultural competence.

The research questions of the current study focus on looking at the kind of challenges in language use combat veterans experience as they transition from military life into university life. Studies on language socialization and academic discourse, by Duff (2010), for example, have shown that students coming to academic institutions have different prior experiences with academic discourse despite the fact that their native language might be the same as the one spoken at the educational institution. In most cases, the student veterans experience change, difficulty, crisis of confidence, conflicts of identity, feelings of strangeness, and the need to discover the rules of an unfamiliar world they were not accustomed to. In the same context, the language socialization theory will facilitate the aims of the current study to identify the different challenges in language use that student veterans experience when they come to the higher education learning environments.

Although the social role of language in learning has been studied in many contexts, the transition of veterans into civilian life has not been covered extensively to date (Dougherty, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for this study, which examines how language socialization influences veterans' transition into civilian life, including their identity presentation.

The Role of Identity in Socialization and Language Use

According to Rovira (2008), identity refers to individuality or the condition of being a certain person. In linguistics, identity refers to an individual's identification as a speaker of one or more languages. In socializing and language use, the linguistic identity forms part and often a significant part of an individual's overall identity (Rassokha, 2010). Both identity and language play a key role in intercultural communication (communication involving different cultures such as military and higher education), especially in learning environments, and influence the identity development of the students in the new environment. The concept of language socialization explains the process by which new individuals in a community or culture socialize with experienced speakers of the language to gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the given group. In other words, a newcomer has to learn the given group's language to become a member and assume the new identity. According to Darvin and Norton (2015), identity is not static and fixed, but it is multiple and dynamic across social and linguistic contexts. When it comes to socialization and language use, identity plays a key role of helping individuals understand how they relate to the environment, the world, how the relationship has been constructed, and future possibilities (Ou & Gu, 2021). The main point to understand in this case is that for individuals, it is normal to agree to be socialized into a certain identity or not agree depending on their objectives and preferences. In socializing and language use, identity also helps individuals differentiate between groups or communities and where they belong. In addition, there is a close connection between language and identity in that language use helps to unite people who belong in the same socialization group (Park, 2011). People who belong to the same

socialization group usually use a common language to portray a common identity. A common identity in a given environment aids in communication due to the same language use as well as giving the group members a sense of pride and belonging in their socialization process. In this case, any individual who does not understand the language spoken in such a group may feel like an outsider due to differences in their identities. However, it is also possible for such an individual to endear themselves into such a group through learning the language and joining the socialization process, which helps them to gain a similar identity.

Summary

This chapter started with the literature review. It began with the literature about the complex relationship between the United States military and higher education institutions, originating with the end of World War II, when many of the changes in how veterans were educated and generally treated in higher education occurred. The government saw the need to educate returning veterans as a way of reducing the influx of semi-skilled workers into the job market. The review of the literature shows that some of the bills passed to help military members transition to the civilian population included the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, the Vietnam G.I. Bill, Veterans Educational Assistance Program, and the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1985.

The literature review also showed how veterans' challenges in language use mainly result from their unique demographic characteristics that distinguish them from other students.The discussion also highlights the general challenges faced by student veterans in higher education environments, including migration stress, acculturation stress, and traumatic stress, working full-time, having families, suffering from PTSD and

related anxiety disorders, a lack of relevant skills, coping difficulties, and difficulties in expressing themselves (Ahern et al., 2015; Barry et al., 2014; Borsari et al., 2017; Dougherty, 2015; Howe & Shpeer, 2019; Lim et al., 2016; Poth et al., 2015). The review of the general challenges in language use faced by student veterans prepared the ground for the discussion on the specific language use challenges in language use faced by the student veterans in the higher education environment. Challenges in language use mainly fall under categories such as culture clash, perspective taking, self-identity development challenges in language use, the difference between military and the university environment, and self-silencing (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). The theoretical framework chosen for the study is language socialization theory, which offers a wider view of language as a form of communication as well as a tool of cultural assimilation (Lønsmann, 2017). This theoretical understanding indicates how language use problems emanate from student veterans' inexperience with communicating with traditional college students and operating within the rules of institutions of higher education, which is a relevant approach for the current study.

Institutions of higher learning can potentially develop programs just for student veterans in order to address this population's particular needs. Hayden et al. (2014) discussed the different needs and barriers facing student veterans, especially in relation to post-military career development. The study showed that the majority of the respondents wanted a link between their experience of the military culture and the higher education environment. In addition, the study also showed that the majority of student veterans did not have a plan when joining institutions of higher education, which complicated the process. Hayden et al. (2014) also identified the need for organizations to develop special

programs for student veterans to aid them in determining their goals post-graduation. Other studies such as Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) and Griffin and Gilbert (2015) noted the importance of institutions of higher learning reducing the gap between military and university culture and removing the challenges in language use student veterans face. Pellegrin (2013) further noted that higher education institutions need to have the resources to guide the affected student veterans to achieve success in the long term by first helping them adapt and integrate into higher education and civilian society by association.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The current study used a mixed-methods research design, which is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and using both quantitative and qualitative data. Creswell (2002) pointed out that the main aim of using a mixed-methods approach is to understand a research problem more completely since neither qualitative nor qualitative method is sufficient to capture the complex details of a situation (Wipulanusat et al., 2020). In a quantitative research approach, the researcher relies on numerical data; in other words, data or information that can be quantified (Allwood, 2012, Apuke, 2017). A researcher mainly isolates the different variables and causally relates them to determine the level of the connections (Arghode, 2012). In addition, quantitative research allows the researcher to determine the different variables to investigate as well as choosing the research instruments that may likely lead to reliable and valid results.

On the other hand, a qualitative research methodology functions as an inquiry process of understanding intended to develop a complex, holistic picture by conducting the study in its natural setting and analyzing words and detailed views of research respondents (Teherani et al., 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher develop knowledge claims based on the constructivist or participatory perspectives, meaning that they mostly construct their meanings as opposed to relying on data (Duckles et al., 2019). In addition, the qualitative research methodology also involves the collection of data from parties in the natural setting (Alase, 2017). In the end, the methodology allows the researchers to produce an answer to the research problem on the basis of different contextual factors.

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The mixed-methods approach has a key advantage in research in that both methods complement each other and allow for a complete analysis of the research question (Bowen et al., 2017; Doyle et al., 2016). According to Creswell (2003), the mixed-methods approach involves the researcher developing knowledge on pragmatic grounds and defining the truth instead of finding it. In a mixed methodology, the researcher is tasked with choosing the variables and units of analysis depending on what they consider to be the most effective approach to answering the research problem. The main rationale behind the choice of the mixed-method approach is that the researcher is able to collect both numerical and textual data, which enables them to better understand and discuss the research issue under study. Then, as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) pointed out, the mixing of the two kinds of data happens at some point in the research process within a single study after the data has been collected.

The current study also made use of the sequential explanatory design (Bowen et al., 2017). In this design, the data are collected over a period of time in two consecutive phases, and the findings from the first phase inform the data collection of the second phase. In the current study before the data collection began, I created the questionnaire and also drafted the guiding questions to be used in the interview because they were required for the IRB proposal. The initial phase involved the collection of quantitative data through the use of the questionnaire. I analyzed the quantitative data by counting the frequency of responses and identifying trends in their responses. I then used the insights from the analysis of quantitative data to revise the guiding questions I had drafted. Then, the second phase involved the collection of qualitative data from different respondents using semi-structured interviews. Revised guiding questions were used to determine

student veterans' personal views on issues that were raised in the questionnaire and were relevant to the research questions (Dugas et al., 2017). The quantitative data provided a general picture of the research issue, while the qualitative data explored personal experiences in depth.

<p align="center">**Recruitment of Participants**</p>

The target population of this study was the student veterans at ASU, including online and in-person students and full-time and part-time students. They had to be enrolled and active students in the university environment for over a year.

Participants were recruited using the convenience sampling method, which involves recruiting participants based on accessibility (Lavrakas, 2008). The main advantage of using the convenience sampling method is that it is prompt, cheap, and uncomplicated when it comes to planning and carrying out the procedures (Etikan et al., 2016). This is particularly convenient when the target population is large, as in the case of the current study, which took place in a large university. In addition, the convenience sampling method was appropriate because additional inputs were not necessary for the research process (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). That is, anyone who met the criteria outlined above was eligible to participate in the study.

The actual recruitment was done in collaboration with the Veterans Center at ASU. I prepared the recruitment letter and questionnaire, had them approved by the IRB (Appendix A), and shared them with the Veterans Center staff. The staff then sent the email to all student veterans at ASU on my behalf. The email was sent out twice by the Veterans Center at ASU to approximately 300 student veterans and 149 student veterans, and 149 student veterans responded.

<p align="center">47</p>

For the interview, one of the survey questions functioned as the recruitment tool. One of the questions asked if they were willing to participate in the follow-up interviews. 11 of the 149 survey participants indicated their willingness and they all participated in the interview phase of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument used in the quantitative research phase was a questionnaire (Appendix D). The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions and dichotomous yes/no answers. The questionnaire consisted of multiple questions organized into a number of sections. The first section of the questionnaire included demographic questions, including participant's age, gender, employment, years on campus, years since last active military duty, and degree pursued. The second section asked questions regarding the participant's experiences in campus life and the university environment. This section contained questions on their reasons for enrolling at ASU, their experiences, the factors influencing their stay, and whether they felt like continuing or not. The main aim of this section was to collect data on how the higher education environment, classroom environment, and veterans' interaction with other students play a key role in influencing the student veteran's experiences. The next level of the questionnaire involved understanding the level of the participant's comfort in the higher education learning environment and collecting additional data on how personal, institutional, and family factors contribute to the challenges in language use experienced by the student veterans. This segment involved the use of a five-point Likert rating scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree."

In the second phase of research, the qualitative phase, the main instrument used in data collection was an in-depth semi-structured interview. The interview protocol involved a total of 15 open-ended questions, which enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information from the respondents (Appendix E). The content of the questions in the interview was based on the questionnaire questions about the challenges in language use the respondents go through in institutions of higher learning. The interview questions focused on the issue of strategies the student veterans used to cope with the challenges in language use in the higher education learning environment.

Both the questionnaire and interview questions were piloted with five student veterans to ensure the clarity of questions and to make sure that the data collection process is not overwhelming to participants.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The first phase of the research process was quantitative, which involved the use of a questionnaire. As described in an earlier section, the questionnaire had different items touching on the different elements of the study. I used QuestionPro to create and distribute the survey. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 11.0.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The second phase of the study involved collecting data through interviews and analyzing it. Respondents received the interview questions either through mail or telephone before the actual interview. This was done to ensure that participants are ready to discuss questions in detail when we met. Each interview took approximately 15-20 minutes.

To analyze qualitative data, I used an open coding approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Open coding allows the data to speak for itself and invites codes to emerge from the dataset. The analysis involved several stages. After I transcribed all interviews, I engaged in the recursive reading of data and identified recurring themes. Then I went back to the data and identified sections where those themes were present. Each theme was further broken down into codes, more specific and narrower manifestations of themes. This process itself was bi-directional and recursive. That is, the analysis of data through themes gave me insights to revise the list of themes, and identifying codes sometimes led to the revision of themes. The process was enlivened by my knowledge of the literature, but, as the open-coding method demands, was primarily driven by the data itself. In the end, there were 20 themes, which were broken down to 273 codes. A web-centered program called Dedoose was used to organize data and keep track of coding

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this study:

- The instruments used in this research study would elicit reliable responses.

- Research participants would fully understand the questions they were asked in both the interview and survey.

- Research participants would provide honest and truthful responses to both the survey and interview questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were addressed in each phase of the study. For instance, permission for conducting the research was obtained in compliance with the regulations of the Institutional Review Board at ASU.

The second ethical issue taken into consideration was informed consent from the respondents. The informed consent form was developed, stating that the respondents were guaranteed a range of rights, the participation was voluntary, and their rights were protected (See Appendix A).

The third ethical issue taken into consideration was the anonymity of the participants in the research process. In the research study, the anonymity of the respondents was protected by using numerical codes in the questionnaire as opposed to names. The codes also ensured that each participant remained confidential and was not exposed to third parties in the research process. The interview process also involved assigning the respondents numbers in order to keep them anonymous. All the data obtained from the research process was saved in a password-protected computer and locked up in an office cabinet in a secure room in order to avoid breaches by third parties

Researcher Positionality

As a veteran schooling at ASU and pursuing a Ph.D. degree, I understand well the challenges in language use that student veterans go through in higher learning institutions. Besides insights from the literature, I relied heavily on my own experience and intuition as a veteran. For example, in my understanding, student veterans face challenges in language use in higher learning institutions mainly due to having different cultures and personalities interacting in the same limited environment. Also, based on my

experience, I knew that the difference between the military and the higher education culture plays a key role in contributing to the majority of problems experienced by student veterans. In my period of stay at ASU, I came to realize that student veterans only face challenges in language use when interacting with non-veteran students. In most cases, student veterans were at ease while interacting with fellow veterans to the point of even helping each other. Such perspectives influenced the way I designed the study, related to my participants, and analyzed and interpreted data.

Summary

The process of choosing the appropriate methodology and research design for a study plays a key role because the process can either be fruitful or disastrous for the final outcome. The main goal of the current research study was to understand the challenges in language use when it comes to veterans' transition to civilian life in higher education. A mixed-methods approach was a fitting choice since it enabled the researcher to collect, analyze, and discuss both numerical and textual data from the respondents, exploring the research questions in depth.

RESULTS

       As I explained in the previous chapter, the study adopted a mixed-method approach to explore various challenges in language use student veterans face when introduced to higher education. This chapter provides an analysis required to make suitable conclusions and answer the research questions. It first presents the demographic information. It then presents the quantitative data, followed by the qualitative data, organized according to the research questions. The complete questionnaire and the list of guiding questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively.

Demographic Information

Gender

       Gender was the first demographic characteristic analyzed and presented in the table. The characteristic is integral in describing the tenet of equality of the study as it aims to incorporate all genders and obtain various views from various gender compositions. The descriptive results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	72	48.3	59.5	59.5
	Female	47	31.5	38.8	98.3
	Non-binary / third gender	2	1.3	1.7	100.0
	Total	121	81.2	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the study participants were male, represented by 59.5 percent. Female respondents made up 38.8 percent of the total respondents. 1.7 percent of the total respondents were binary/third gender.

Age

Based on the results presented in Table 2, 58.7 percent of respondents were aged 25-34 years. The second-largest number of respondents were aged between 35-44 years and were represented by 19 percent of the total respondents. Respondents aged 18-24 years were represented by 15.7 percent. The least number of respondents were above 55 years and made up only 1.7 percent of the total.

Table 2
What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	19	12.8	15.7	15.7
	25-34	71	47.7	58.7	74.4
	35-44	23	15.4	19.0	93.4
	45-54	6	4.0	5.0	98.3
	55 and older	2	1.3	1.7	100.0
	Total	121	81.2	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

Branch of Service

Table 3 below indicates the distribution of respondents based on their various

branches of service in the military.

Table 3
What is your branch of service?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Army	65	43.6	53.7	53.7
	Air Force	17	11.4	14.0	67.8
	Marine Corps	19	12.8	15.7	83.5
	Navy	19	12.8	15.7	99.2
	Coast Guard	1	.7	.8	100.0
	Total	121	81.2	100.0	
Missing	System	28	18.8		
Total		149	100.0		

The table above indicates that the majority of the respondents served in the Army,

accounting for 53.7 percent of respondents. Another 15.7 percent of respondents served

in the Marine Corps and the Navy. A lower number of respondents served in the Coast

Guard and represented only 0.8 percent of the total respondents.

Length of Service in the Military

A total of 54.5 percent of respondents served in the military between 3-6 years, followed by those who served 6-12 years, accounting for 22.3 percent of the total respondents. Only 1.7 percent of respondents served for 12-20 years.

Table 4
How long did you serve in the military?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3 years	22	14.8	18.2	18.2
	3-6 years	66	44.3	54.5	72.7
	6-12 years	27	18.1	22.3	95.0
	12-20 years	2	1.3	1.7	96.7
	20-40 years	4	2.7	3.3	100.0
	Total	121	81.2	100.0	
Missing	System	28	18.8		
Total		149	100.0		

Prior College Experience before Military Service

This demographic characteristic is essential in describing the effects of prior exposure to academic environment on their adjustment to ASU.

Table 5
Did you have prior college experience before serving in the military?

		Frequency	Percentile	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	84	56.4	69.4	69.4
	No	37	24.8	30.6	100.0
	Total	121	81.2	100.0	
Missing	System	28	18.8		
Total		149	100.0		

When respondents were asked whether they had prior college experience before joining the military, 69.4 percent of respondents selected 'Yes' as the response to the

question. Only 30.6 percent of respondents indicated that they did not possess prior college experience before joining the military and responded 'No' to the question.

<div align="center">

Presentation of Quantitative Data

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As I explained earlier, the first set of data was quantitative collected through the questionnaire. In this section, the presentation of quantitative data is organized according to the two research questions.

Answers to Research Question 1

The literature points to student veterans facing a number of challenges in language use as they shift from using the military language to the civilian language and the academic language. Research Question 1: *What kind of challenges in language use do combat veterans experience as they transition from military to civilian life in higher education?* aimed to provide evidence of challenges in language use that student veterans face at ASU

Transition to College in General

There were two questions that asked about the transition to university in general. They are not specifically about language, but they give a general sense of how difficult or easy the transition was.

Table 6
Q1 - As a recent veteran, starting classes at ASU was a big adjustment for me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	39	26.2	32.5	32.5
	Agree	48	32.2	40.0	72.5
	Neutral	18	12.1	15.0	87.5
	Disagree	15	10.1	12.5	100.0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 6 indicates that most student veterans had challenges in language use associated with adjusting to ASU classes. This was represented by 32.5 percent and 40.0 percent of respondents selecting 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' respectively to the statement *As a recent veteran, starting classes at ASU was a big adjustment for me.*

Table 7
Q2 - Before starting classes, I wondered if I had enough academic skills and knowledge to do well at ASU

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	40	26.8	33.6	33.6
	Agree	48	32.2	40.3	73.9
	Neutral	13	8.7	10.9	84.9
	Disagree	15	10.1	12.6	97.5
	Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.5	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 7 indicates that the majority of the respondents (40.34 percent) agreed that before starting classes, they had wondered if they had enough academic skills and knowledge to do well at ASU. In addition, a large percentage of 33.61 percent also strongly agree with the question, with 10.92 percent remaining neutral, 12.61 percent disagreeing and 2.52 percent strongly disagreeing. As shown in this case, a majority of the respondents in the study either agreed or strongly agreed that they had at one time wondered whether they had enough academic skills and knowledge to do well at ASU.

Classroom Communication in General

Some items on the questionnaire were about classroom communication in general.

Two of them specifically asked about academic vocabulary.

Table 8
Q3 - I am confident that I am using appropriate academic vocabulary in my classes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	31	20.8	25.8	25.8
	Agree	71	47.7	59.2	85.0
	Neutral	12	8.1	10.0	95.0
	Disagree	6	4.0	5.0	100.0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

The responses indicate that the majority of student veterans are confident that they

use the appropriate academic vocabulary. This is supported by 59.2 percent and 25.8

percent selecting 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' as responses to the statement,

respectively.

Table 9
Q5 - I generally understand academic concepts in written texts for my classes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	26	17.4	21.7	21.7
	Agree	71	47.7	59.2	80.8
	Neutral	20	13.4	16.7	97.5
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.7	99.2
	Disagree	1	.7	.8	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 9 shows that a majority of the respondents at 59.17 percent agree that they generally understand the academic concepts in written texts for their classes. A lower figure of 21.67 percent indicated that they strongly agree, while 16.67 percent indicated that they are neutral. The statistics highlight that a majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they generally understood the academic concepts in written texts for their classes.

Other questions examined the student veterans' concerns about being understood.

In Q6, participants were asked if their non-veteran classmates understand the comments they make in class.

Table 10
Q6 - My non-veteran classmates understand the comments I make in class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	16.8	20.8	20.8
	Agree	59	39.6	49.2	70.0
	Neutral	25	16.8	20.8	90.8
	Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.5	93.3
	Disagree	8	5.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

The results indicate that a majority of non-veteran students clearly understand the comments made by student veterans. This was represented by 16.8 percent, indicating that they 'Strongly Agree' with the statement *My non-veteran classmates understand the comments I make in class* while 39.6 percent selected 'Agree' to the statement as indicated in Table 10.

Question 7 of the survey provides an overview of student veterans'

communication challenges in language use at ASU.

Table 11
Q7 - I often worry that my comments in class discussions are not clear to non-veteran students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	16	10.7	13.3	13.3
	Agree	52	34.9	43.3	56.7
	Neutral	17	11.4	14.2	70.8
	Disagree	28	18.8	23.3	94.2
	Strongly disagree	7	4.7	5.8	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with the

statement *I often worry that my comments in class discussions are not clear to non-*

veteran students. The majority of the respondents selected 'Agree' to the statement and

represented 34.9 percent, indicating that student veterans faced a huge communication

challenge in class.

In addition, participants reported on their overall effectiveness and

comfortableness with classroom discussion in Questions 16 and 17.

Table 12
Q17 - I communicate effectively in class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	14.1	17.6	17.6
	Agree	79	53.0	66.4	84.0
	Neutral	16	10.7	13.4	97.5
	Disagree	3	2.0	2.5	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 12 shows that a high percentage of 66.39 percent agreed that they

communicate effectively in class, while 17.65 percent strongly agreed with the statement.

In addition, 13.45 percent of the respondents were neutral in their responses. As shown in

this case, a majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they

communicated effectively in class, highlighting that the majority of the veterans did not

have any issue with communication and use of language in the class setting.

Table 13
Q16 - I feel included in class discussions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	18	12.1	15.1	15.1
	Agree	71	47.7	59.7	74.8
	Neutral	22	14.8	18.5	93.3
	Disagree	6	4.0	5.0	98.3
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.7	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

The majority of the student veterans selected 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' to the

statement *I feel included in class discussions*. The responses were represented by 15.13

percent of student veterans selecting 'Strongly Agree' and 59.66 percent selecting

'Agree.'

Interactions with Peers

Some items on the questionnaire specifically asked about veterans' interaction

with their peers outside of structured, in-class discussions. The result shows that the

majority of student veterans have interaction with their peers.

Table 14:
Q11 – I often speak to fellow students during class, either to discuss course material or to have informal conversations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	17	11.4	14.3	14.3
	Agree	64	43.0	53.8	68.1
	Neutral	20	13.4	16.8	84.9
	Disagree	10	6.7	8.4	93.3
	Strongly disagree	8	5.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

Question 11 aimed at establishing the degree of challenge student veterans face

when socializing with other students. The majority of the students selected 'Strongly

Agree' and 'Agree' to Question 11 of the survey, represented by 14.3 percent and 53.8

percent, respectively, indicating that student veterans did not have significant social

interaction challenges in language use. Only 5.4 percent and 6.7 percent of student

veterans selected 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' to Question 11.

Table 15

Q12 – I often communicate with fellow students outside of class, either to discuss course material or to have informal communication

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	16	10.7	13.4	13.4
	Agree	50	33.6	42.0	55.5
	Neutral	22	14.8	18.5	73.9
	Disagree	18	12.1	15.1	89.1
	Strongly disagree	13	8.7	10.9	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		
Total		149	100.0		

The table above indicates that 13.4 percent of student veterans 'Strongly Agree' that they communicate with fellow students outside of class about either course materials or have informal discussions. A further 42.0 percent of students indicate that they 'Agree' and have both class and informal communications/discussions with their fellow students outside school. Another 15.13 percent and 10.92 percent of the respondents selected 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' as the responses to the statement.

Interaction with Instructors

Some of the questionnaire items were about interaction with instructors.

Table 16

Q14 - I am comfortable sharing academic concerns with my instructor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	16.8	21.0	21.0
	Agree	72	48.3	60.5	81.5
	Neutral	14	9.4	11.8	93.3
	Disagree	8	5.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 16 shows that a majority of the respondents at 60.50 percent are comfortable sharing academic concerns with their instructor. In addition, 21.01 percent strongly agreed, 11.76 percent were neutral in their responses, while 6.72 percent of the respondents disagreed. As shown in this case, a majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable sharing their academic concerns with their instructors, further showing that communication between the student veterans and the instructors was not an issue for the majority of them.

Also the questions below examined students veterans' interaction with instructors during class.

Table 17

Q9 - I often communicate with my instructor during class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	13.4	16.7	16.7
	Agree	69	46.3	57.5	74.2
	Neutral	15	10.1	12.5	86.7
	Disagree	12	8.1	10.0	96.7
	Strongly disagree	4	2.7	3.3	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 17 shows that a large percentage agree about communication with the instructor as it represents 57.50 percent. In addition, 16.67 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 12.50 percent were neutral, 10.00 percent disagreed, and less than 3.3 percent strongly disagreed.

Table 18
Q4 - I often ask my instructor for clarification during a lecture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	15	10.1	12.5	12.5
	Agree	41	27.5	34.2	46.7
	Neutral	22	14.8	18.3	65.0
	Disagree	37	24.8	30.8	95.8
	Strongly disagree	5	3.4	4.2	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 18 indicates that the majority of the respondents agree that they ask their instructors for clarification during a lecture, at 34.17 percent. In addition, a lower percentage of 12.50 percent indicated that they strongly agree, 18.33 percent reported that they are neutral, and a high percentage of 30.83 percent reported that they disagree while 4.17 percent reported that they strongly disagree. In this case, it is shown that a majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they asked their instructors for clarifications during a lecture.

Question 10 examined the interaction with the instructor outside the class.

Table 19
Q10 - I often communicate with my instructor outside of class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	14.1	17.5	17.5
	Agree	61	40.9	50.8	68.3
	Neutral	21	14.1	17.5	85.8
	Disagree	15	10.1	12.5	98.3
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.7	100.0
	Total	120	80.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	19.5		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 19 shows that the majority of the respondents, at 50.83 percent, agreed that they often communicate with their instructors outside of class through email, during office hours, or in some other form. In addition, 17.50 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, 17.50 percent were neutral, 12.50 percent disagreed while none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Answers to Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was *How do combat veterans present their identity as veterans in academic settings?* The following survey questions/statements presented in the frequency tables below describe how participants reveal their student veteran status and how they feel about it. It started by asking how strongly they identify as a veteran.

Table 20
Q20 - I strongly identify as a veteran

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	30	20.1	25.9	25.9
	Agree	53	35.6	45.7	71.6
	Neutral	25	16.8	21.6	93.1
	Disagree	8	5.4	6.9	100.0
	Total	116	77.9	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

Table 20 above indicates that 25.86 percent of respondents 'Strongly Agree' with the statement 'I strongly identify as a veteran' while 45.69 percent of the respondents 'Agree' with the statement.

Respondents were further asked to indicate how comfortable they generally were in identifying as ASU students and veterans. The responses are provided in the frequency table below.

Table 21
Q21 - I generally feel comfortable being both a veteran and a student on campus

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	31	20.8	26.7	26.7
	Agree	60	40.3	51.7	78.4
	Neutral	19	12.8	16.4	94.8
	Disagree	4	2.7	3.4	98.3
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.7	100.0
	Total	116	77.9	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

Respondents who 'Strongly Agree' to the statement were represented by 26.72 percent, while those who 'Agree' with the statement were represented by 51.75 percent

of the total respondents. Therefore, the majority of the student veterans were comfortable

identifying as both students and veterans on campus.

Table 22

Q22 - I am comfortable publicly identifying as a veteran on campus in every situation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	29	19.5	25.0	25.0
	Agree	48	32.2	41.4	66.4
	Neutral	25	16.8	21.6	87.9
	Disagree	11	7.4	9.5	97.4
	Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.6	100.0
	Total	116	77.9	100.0	
Total		149	100.0		

The table above indicates that student veterans are comfortable identifying

themselves as veterans in public in every campus situation, with 25 percent responding

'Strongly Agree' and 41.4 percent responding 'Agree.' Only 9.5 percent and 2.6 percent

of respondents selected 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Agree' as responses to the statement.

There were also a set of questions that asked if student veterans shared their

veteran status to others on campus. Statistical analysis results are provided in the

frequency tables below.

Table 23

Q23 - I often share my veteran status with my instructors

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	20	13.4	17.2	17.2
	Agree	44	29.5	37.9	55.2
	Neutral	21	14.1	18.1	73.3
	Disagree	22	14.8	19.0	92.2
	Strongly disagree	9	6.0	7.8	100.0
	Total	116	77.9	100.0	

Table 23 above indicates that most respondents are comfortable sharing their veteran status with instructors. This is supported by the majority of respondents selecting 'Agree' as a response to the statement, 38 percent of the total respondents. A further 19 percent of respondents selected 'Disagree' as the response to the statement.

Table 24
Q24 - I often share my veteran status with my classmates

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	22	14.8	19.0	19.0
	Agree	42	28.2	36.2	55.2
	Neutral	26	17.4	22.4	77.6
	Disagree	20	13.4	17.2	94.8
	Strongly disagree	6	4.0	5.2	100.0
	Total	116	77.9	100.0	
Missing	System	33	22.1		
Total		149	100.0		

Based on the results presented in Table 24 above, the majority of the respondents are comfortable sharing their veteran status with other students. Responses to the statement *I often share my veteran status with my classmates* were distributed as follows: 19 percent of respondents selected 'Strongly Agree' while 36.2 percent of respondents selected 'Agree.' Respondents who disagreed represented 17.2 percent, and 5.2 percent strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, there was a set of questions that asked participants how comfortable they were talking about various veteran-related matters beyond merely sharing their status.

Table 25

Q15 - I am comfortable sharing veteran-related matters with my instructor (such as doctors' appointments or how my service has impacted my learning needs)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	28	18.8	23.5	23.5
	Agree	51	34.2	42.9	66.4
	Neutral	17	11.4	14.3	80.7
	Disagree	16	10.7	13.4	94.1
	Strongly disagree	7	4.7	5.9	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		
Total		149	100.0		

Table 25 shows that a majority of the respondents at 42.86 percent agreed that they are comfortable sharing veteran-related matters with their instructors, such as doctors' appointments or how their service impacted their learning needs. In addition, 23.53 percent strongly agreed with the statement, 14.29 percent were neutral in their responses, and 13.45 percent disagreed, while 5.88 percent strongly disagreed.

Table 26

Q13 - I am comfortable bringing up my military experiences as part of class discussions about academic topics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	21	14.1	17.6	17.6
	Agree	59	39.6	49.6	67.2
	Neutral	20	13.4	16.8	84.0
	Disagree	14	9.4	11.8	95.8
	Strongly disagree	5	3.4	4.2	100.0
	Total	119	79.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	20.1		

Total		149	100.0		

Table 26 shows that the majority of the respondents at 49.58 percent agreed that they are comfortable bringing up their military experiences as part of class discussions about academic topics. In addition, 17.65 percent strongly agreed, 16.81 percent were neutral, 11.76 percent disagreed, and 4.20 percent strongly disagreed.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data in this section are organized by the two research questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was *What kind of challenges in language use do combat veterans experience as they transition from military to civilian life in higher education?* During the interview, several themes related to language and communication emerged. They were not always about challenges in language use or problems and thus did not directly answer Research Question 1. But the excerpts shed light on participants' understanding of differences in language use between military and higher education contexts and their process of learning new ways of communication, which are relevant to the question.

More specifically, two themes I introduce here related to different types of languages that participants had to navigate through: military language and academic language.

Military Language

Several veterans pointed out that military language does not work well in the university setting. For example, Participant 2 shared that her experience when using military acronyms caused misunderstandings with others.

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So I was during a women's history months, I, you know, as the president of the

women veterans club, I, uh, got in touch with another, like, club on, based on a

Zoom meeting, like what we were going, like, what events you were going to do

personally with my club women, it's called, uh, so the, the, her story events, and

she was talking about, uh, this one video and how she wanted more, more people

involved. And I said, oh, like, what's, who's the POC for that. I was like, and the

girl, girl was like, um, like, uh, point of contact, you know, cause now, now POC

is an acronym for people of color.

The influence of military language is not just about vocabulary and acronyms but

what they say. When asked, "Have you ever felt that your use of military language

caused a conflict or misunderstanding with a classmate?" Participant 6 shared:

Yes, that's definitely happened before, I know that I kind of said something a little

bit edgy. And I really was. It was my fault, but I said something a little bit edgy

not realizing you know, people don't share the same feelings or outlook that we do

in that. It's a little bit it's a little bit different. So now I learned from that situation.

So, yeah, completion rate in there I could tell by her reaction that it was like, not

good.

However, most veterans seemed to have learned to turn off military language

when in class and do not use military language or military acronyms. Participant 8 stated:

I think that's what makes me a little different than the traditional maybe full-time

active-duty veteran, because I was a National Guard, so I wasn't, I had a good

blend of, you know both worlds and so I was able to kind of balance that with in

my civilian life which is this, my school, and going back and forth between

service I was able to. Yeah, I was able to kind of turn it on and off I knew how to do that. yeah, I understand both languages and so I was able to kind of go back and forth kind of like you know when I speak Spanish. And so I'm able to turn it on and off and I know how to interpret both English and Spanish. Same thing with military language, but a nice, the question about Have you ever felt that your use of military language caused conflict or misunderstanding.

What the excerpts seem to suggest is that veterans sometimes accidentally used the military language, and this may have caused some misunderstanding or conflicts, but the problems were not prolonged because they quickly became aware of the differences and learned to turn it off.

Academic Language

Participants also shared their thoughts on and experience with the academic language. One observation made by participants, for example, was how the academic language is different from the civilian language that they use on a daily basis. Because of this, they had to learn a new way of communication. In the following excerpts, for example, a veteran discusses how emailing a professor is not like emailing your friend.

I would say that the only challenge I would have I've gotten over it recently, but it's like emailing professors (language use), 'cause I'll want to be like super duper formal, like doctor, when really you can just, you can just say like, Hey, Bob, you know, get on how to get over that. (Participant 1)

Participant 6 also talked about how learning to "speak in academia" was a challenge when he came to ASU:

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Going to see it first I did, I started out in a community college and then kind of

moved up from there and the community college was kind of a what we call a

degree mill, which is what a lot of military does is just go in there, pretty much as

long as you show up you get an A. And then I moved over to ASU, and it was a

lot different. So not understanding like the lingo and then not really knowing how

to speak in academia.

However, most participants expressed that they have learned the academic

language. Participant 6, after expressing the initial challenge (the previous quote), further

stated:

The challenge for me at first but now it's very easy now that I've kind of figured

out, you know, using that kind of language.

In fact, those who had more exposure to the academic environments seemed to

feel more comfortable and had fewer challenge with the academic language. For

example, Participant 8 above talked about how being a National Guard and being

connected to both military and civilian life, including being in school, had made it easy

for her in terms of the language. Participant 2 also said:

I've always been like present in academia. So, um, like, uh, like during my

military service, I was like, I took, I would take like one, one course, one or two

courses a year. And so I believe that that set me up to still be successful, like with,

um, like the verbiage in classes today. Well, uh, to be, just to kind of clarify, since

I have not had long gaps in education, I feel like I'm still quote unquote, I'm still

in the loop.

However, differences do not always lead to problems. Some participants, for instance, expressed that the academic environment is an open environment and easy to connect with other people and talk freely.

> They're pretty easy going and open environment, so it's pretty easy to, to talk
>
> openly and feel confident in like you're being accepted. (Participant 1)

These excerpts seem to suggest that, just like the military language, the academic language may have caused some problems at first, but things got easier as they became more fluent in it.

Research Question 2

The second research question was *How do combat veterans present their identity as veterans in academic settings?* During the interview, themes related to identity also emerged. The excerpts below highlight their level of comfort in identifying themselves as student veterans in the university settings and in sharing their military experience.

Revealing Veteran Status

Most veterans who participated in the interviews strongly identified themselves as veterans. For example, Participant 7 said: "I would say I definitely identify very strongly as a veteran. Okay, um, you know, in my bag I still have, you know, like the eagle globe and anchor."

But how comfortable they felt about revealing their veteran status was complex. Some students, like Participant 2, preferred not to share their veteran status with their instructors:

> I don't think all of my professors know that I'm a veteran. Oh yeah. Like I, it's not
>
> really something that, hi, I'm Elizabeth, I'm a US Air Force veteran. Like I, I don't

introduce myself like that mainly, um, because I don't want them to treat me

differently.

Participant 6 also stated:

I tend to try not to bring it up because for one I don't like the tension that I get and

for two, I don't want it to be like, I want to get graded for my work and not for my

military status.

When it is toward the instructor, the most common reason for hesitation seems to

be that they did not want to be treated differently from other students.

With other students, too, there seems to be some hesitation to share their veteran

status. Participant 3 stated:

I would, you know, would talk about it, but I wouldn't like to make a conversation

specifically just to talk about that. You know, like if it came up, you know, I have

no problem talking about it.

Veteran Status and Peer Communication

Another theme that emerged in relation to the veterans' identity was how the

shared knowledge of their status affected peer communication. More specifically, in

several interviews, participants observed that the conversation about military life and

what they experienced in service do not always go well because their non-veteran peers

do not understand and could not relate. Participant 1, when asked, "Have you ever tried to

have a conversation about your veteran status with the classmates?" responded:

Yeah. I've had some conversations like that in class. Usually [went] really well,

usually, you know, that they're, they're accepting and, you know, curious, they

might say, "Oh, we know, what'd you do? Like, that's cool. Like, you know, my,

like my brother did this or my cousin did this." Usually it's, it's really good sometimes, it's not, not weird, but just kinda like, not like the conversation doesn't like click and that that's fine too. Cause you know, people have their preferences and stuff, but it's always been fine.

Similarly, this participant stated that most of the time, he does not communicate with non-veterans about the veteran or "military experience" because they do not understand.

It was just, I just described it as a time in my life like oh yeah, I was in the Navy, I don't know, it doesn't really get much deeper than that. I think I've talked to the one other friend who's a veteran in class. We've talked more, because I mean he, I don't know, sometimes I think I don't share it with people because it feels like I'm, I would have to explain a lot, because it's my friend who's a veteran. If we start a conversation and I don't have to like, explain chains of command and certain rules, and I feel like I'm especially with my friends I remember when I was on leave. And I would try to tell them a story about work, it ended up like there's like three four tangents. Because you need all the context for this story that makes sense almost there's like a lot of details right. Yeah, I think maybe that's why I don't really talk to people because it's the themes like work.

They felt that the lack of shared experience prevented them from sharing their military experience—an important part of their veteran identity—with non-veteran peers. Their feeling toward their veteran peers is completely opposite. They often feel they can share more with their veteran peers. For example, Participant 5, quoted above, said:

And with somebody who's already a veteran it's like, easy to talk about it. Yeah,

that's right I, I've been on, I think you're on sort of the same, the same previous

answers I got also from other student veterans, they, they have the same thing,

you know.

Participant 10 went further to say that student veterans can often spot each other,

and their shared experience brings them closer:

It was never really initiated. Because somehow like for me I could tell who's a

student veteran and whatnot because we have this kind of low face, and just kind

of like a relaxed, carefree kind of attitude and whatnot. And there's an aura that is

presented among us and the students would sometimes naturally approach us and

say, "Are you, you know? Are you a student veteran and whatnot." Sometimes it

piques their curiosity of who we are, what our stories are in, they become

interested in, then we develop friendships, through that.

What these excerpts seem to show is that student veterans are aware of how their

veteran status affects their interaction with their peers and are conscious of it when they

reveal their status.

Summary

This chapter presented a detailed analysis of data collected through a quantitative

and qualitative approach. The results obtained were used to provide answers to the two

main research questions of this study, first demographic data and then quantitative and

qualitative data that relate to the research questions. In the next chapter, I will attempt to

answer the research questions more fully by integrating findings from both quantitative

and qualitative analysis and connecting them back to the existing literature.

DISCUSSION

The detailed discussion of the findings in this chapter links them to past and present studies and the study's theoretical framework. Ochs and Schieffelin (2008) explain the nexus between language use, socialization, and transitioning to a new environment, which dovetails with answering the first research question on challenges in language use student veterans face in higher education institutions. The second question involved examining how combat veterans at ASU present their identity as veterans in academic settings. In addition to answering these questions, this chapter shows how this study contributes to existing scholarly conversations.

Research Question 1

The first research question was *What kind of challenges in language use do combat veterans experience as they transition from military to civilian life in higher education?* Overall, the findings suggested that there were some challenges emerging from the differences between military and academic languages and participants were often concerned if their non-veteran peers understood them or not. However, the data also showed that student veterans eventually learned the academic language through being in an academic environment and thus initial challenges in language use were solved over time.

Previous literature including Shpeer (2019), Ahern et al. (2015), and Howe and Shpeer (2019) have found that student veterans face a number of challenges in language use when transitioning to civilian life in higher education, including communication problems based on cultural clashes and differences in language use. Other studies have particularly pointed to communication difficulties, which is what led the researcher to

choose this topic for the current study. For example, a study by Howe and Shpeer (2019) indicated that despite having prior academic knowledge and experience and speaking the same native language in the military and school environment, language use is a challenge to student veterans. Hayes and Matthew (2014) suggested that student veterans often practice self-silencing due to differences in military and school environment systems; hence communication and language use may be challenging. Also, the study by Wand (2013) showed that most student veterans face challenges in their quest toward integrating into a civilian environment and experience stress, anxiety, lack of relevant skills, coping difficulties, inability to grasp abstract thoughts, and immense difficulties in expressing themselves as a result. Consequently, Bustamante et al. (2018) stated that as student veterans migrate to a new school environment, they experience migration stress as they try to adapt to a new community. Joshua at el. (2016) supported these findings by indicating that student veterans face mental challenges due to migration stress as they attempt to assimilate to a new community.

The literature points to student veterans facing challenges as they shift from using the military language to using the civilian language in general and the academic language specifically. Even though the literature points to these issues, the responses of student veterans in this study indicated that challenges in language use are not a great concern for them. Quantitative data analysis indicates that most student veterans were confident that they were using the correct academic vocabulary in class. The majority of participants interviewed did not experience any challenges in language use. When asked, "Have you felt that you did not possess the language skill to participate in academic conversations in class?" participants such as 6 and 11 answered by indicating that they did not face any

communication and language use challenges in language use in class. Communication between fellow students and instructors seemed also strong.

Another area discussed in the literature is the culture clash between veteran and non-veteran students. For example, Shpeer (2019) indicated that student veterans faced challenges in language use due to cultural clashes between the cultural differences between military and civilian life. The findings are further supported by the language socialization theory as presented by Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015), who explained the relationship between language use, socialization, and cultural differences and homogeneity in a new environment. In addition, Garret (2008) utilized the language socialization theory in their findings and argued that socialization is made possible through a link between language and culture. The qualitative findings of the study also supported that the culture clash caused by differences in language existed, which may ultimately hurt socializing efforts between veteran and non-veteran students. When asked, "Have you ever felt that you already use of military language has caused a conflict or misunderstanding with a classmate?" Participant 6 responded: "Yes, that's definitely happened before."

Socialization is another major area where previous research has explored challenges in language use for student veterans. According to Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015), language socialization refers to the "process by which individuals acquire, reproduce, and transform the knowledge and competence that enable them to participate appropriately within specific communities of language users" (p. 319). The language socialization theory explained by Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015) further indicates that the

use of appropriate academic and non-academic language promotes socialization among students and helps student veterans learn academic concepts.

Guardado (2018) used language socialization theory to indicate that language is a tool for communication that also creates strong social ties. By reducing the challenges in language use, student veterans learn to socialize with non-veteran students in a new environment, hence speeding up their transition to civilian life. Garrett (2008) and Poth et al. (2015) supported this conclusion in their findings by stating that the language socialization explains the nexus between language use and social learning in any environment. These findings are consistent with those of Jacobs (2014), who stated that language use and communication in higher education help to integrate student veterans into the school environment by bringing both veteran and non-veteran students together, despite the differences in military and non-military culture. What these studies suggest is that socializing with peers is one critical way to become socialized into a new, academic community. In this case, socializing refers to the action or practice of participating in social activities or mixing socially with others, while being socialized refers to an individual or group of individuals having been made to behave in a way that is acceptable to a particular society.

To evaluate whether this was a challenge for student veterans at ASU, participants were asked to state the degree to which they agree with the statement *I often speak to fellow students during class, either to discuss academic material or to have a formal conversation*. The majority of the participants selected 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' as responses to the statement. The findings indicate that student veterans did not find it difficult to create social ties with other students based on academic and non-academic

conversations. Therefore, previous studies are different from the findings of this study regarding socialization challenges in language use.

The only major challenge that a majority of participants agreed on was adjusting to the university environment and academic language used at ASU after being deployed in the military. Students were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with the survey question, *As a recent veteran student, starting classes at ASU was a big adjustment for me*. 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' were selected as responses to this particular survey statement by 32.5 percent and 40 percent of the participants respectively. Qualitative data provides evidence indicating that student veterans faced various adjustment challenges. Participant 5 states:

> I thought I had filled a form out, but I was wrong, so I wasn't going to receive the Navy payment for it. In the next month. So I started off slow, but I got on track, I would say.

> I do not think it was too hard. I know that we did talk about college enrollments and all that when I left the Navy like we did those trainings, but that was last November for me, so I don't, I definitely didn't remember like I wasn't super prepared to do it.

Although many participants expressed similar struggles, there were also a few who did not. For example, Participant 1 of the study did not face adjustment challenges. The quoted excerpt below provides evidence of a student who did not have enrollment challenges in language use:

I think it was a good experience. I think, I, I think it was pretty

straightforward and I may have emailed my advisors once or twice, but I think I

had a pretty easy time doing it and things were pretty self-explanatory.

The majority of the student veterans in this sample, however, faced adjustment

challenges when transitioning to a civil environment at ASU, but some students did not

encounter any problems.

The current study's findings are consistent with those of Livingston and Bauman

(2013), who described student veterans' transitioning and adjustment phase into a higher

education environment after the redeployment process. Their findings indicated that the

transition phase among student veterans ushered them into an environment significantly

different from they were used to. Therefore, they require new social and academic skills

and knowledge to blend into their new environment. Veterans require time to master

various cultures and concepts in the university environment, and the process may take a

while.

These findings are backed by previous studies that consider the nexus between

language and socialization. For example, Rassokha (2010) indicated that while student

veterans and non-veteran students have different language use based on their life

experiences, they are brought together as classmates through a common academic

language and dialect. These findings can be understood through the research of Howe and

Shpeer (2019), whose perspective-taking approach indicates that the social norms,

identities, beliefs, and cultures of different groups are created based on the interactions

that lead to comparisons between groups with different social norms and beliefs. Ochs

and Schieffelin (2008) similarly indicated that both language and socialization influence

the process of identity formation and acceptance. The language socialization framework Sook Lee and Bucholtz (2015) used in this study helps to explain how student veterans create social ties and communicate beliefs and different issues with different groups of people (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Supporting evidence on the nexus between language and socialization is further provided by Hayden et al. (2014), who indicated that transitioning to a new environment from military duties proves challenging to student veterans and that most student veterans are walking into a higher education environment without prior experience and knowledge of life in higher education learning institutions; thus, they require a road map/direction for guidance toward adjustment and transition. For example, in a school environment, the system is intended to benefit all students and aims to create uniformity; however, the approach of educational institutions, which is based on quality, may end up being less inclusive to other students, especially military students, who need different kinds of support (Smith-Osborne, 2012). In this study, Participant 6 talked about the role of knowing academic "lingo" in their transition. He stated: "Then I moved over to ASU, and it was a lot different. So not understanding like the lingo and then not really knowing how to speak in academia." This excerpt indicates that student veterans may not understand the various components of the school environment and may require guidance and help.

One important point of discussion in relation to language and communication was whether participants felt comfortable with classmates. Participants were asked to indicate whether they felt included in in-class discussions in this study. Of the respondents, 59.7 percent and 15.1 percent respectively indicated that they felt included in class discussions

by selecting 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to the statement, *I feel included in class discussions*. These findings are expected, especially when students do not face significant language and communication challenges in language use. Therefore, the findings on the challenges in language use that student veterans face point toward mixed responses. The majority of responses indicate that they do not face challenges in language use, but some interviewees indicated that they faced some challenges in language use which were attributed to the use of the military language in academic settings. Adjustment challenges in language use beleaguer student veterans as they are ushered into a civilian environment.

Research Question 2

The second research question explored how combat veterans present their identity as veterans in academic settings.

Quantitative analysis results show that most of the respondents strongly identified as student veterans on campus and they had no problem identifying as student veterans to instructors, non-veteran students, and fellow student veterans.

The quantitative data analysis supports that the student veterans in the sample were comfortable being both students and veterans. A huge percentage of respondents stated that they were comfortable being both veterans and students (25 percent and 41 percent of respondents selected 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to the statement *I am comfortable publicly identifying as a veteran on campus in every situation*). Only 9.5 percent and 2.65 of respondents selected 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' as responses to the statement.

The combat veteran conceptual identity model developed by Hammond (2015) supports the study's findings. The model is made up of a major aspect, the core identity, and five other essential elements, including the inferred perception of self, perception of self, perception of others, civilian interactions, and connections to other veterans. According to the model, the self-perception explains high levels of comfort among student veterans in their veteran status and sharing veteran experiences based on what they think of themselves. Therefore, student veterans are comfortable with their veteran status and sharing their veteran experiences with other students since they are inferred positively. The fact that the student veterans in the study are comfortable identifying as both students and veterans offers an assumption that veterans feel their military language and culture knowledge is compatible with the academic environment, thus allowing them to form social connections with non-veteran and student veterans.

Another key segment of the study is examining how veterans feel about sharing their status and experience with instructors. Quantitative data analysis results indicate that 37.2 percent of the respondents agree that they are comfortable sharing their veteran status and experiences with instructors. Only 19.0 percent and 7.8 percent indicate that they disagree and are not comfortable sharing their veteran status with instructors. Due to the curiosity of instructors, many participants comfortably share their veteran status and military experiences in class, thus creating strong social bonds with instructors.

Classmates were also curious about student veterans' military experiences. Participant 1 had no problem sharing his veteran experiences and status with students and instructors in class.

Yeah, so I've always, either felt like it was indifference. Like it, like, it didn't like, it sort of didn't matter my status which is, which is fine. I almost prefer that. And then the only other time besides that is I felt like almost just like more curiosity and almost like, like acceptance in a way, but yeah, so sort of someone being like I think I've had a professor saying like, oh, that's really cool. Like, if you don't mind me asking, 'what'd you do' like you know like 'how was that experience?' Cause I was, you know, like involved with that professor in a project. So it was just my sort of talk to him about it. So it's always either been like indifferent or positive

A particular avenue for creating bonds with non-veteran students came about when non-veteran students revealed that their parents and relatives are also veterans. The work of Ou and Gu (2021) back up these findings, as their study indicates that socialization, identity, and language use play a significant role in creating avenues for interactions and the formation of relationships in various environments. Olsen et al. (2014) and Osborne (2014) also pointed out the negative consequences of student veterans not receiving acceptance; their studies found that the majority of student veterans feel isolated when instructors and other students do not recognize them as veterans, since denying this part of their identity means that these individuals fail to understand the unique challenges in language use student veterans undergo.

Student veterans also feel more supported when they have other student veterans in their classes or know that other students are easily accessible on campus. A study by Hammond (2015) indicated that student veterans feel comfortable and supported when they are among fellow student veterans since they feel freer to share their experiences and to publicly identify as student veterans. Vacci et al. (2017) also found that student

veterans strongly identify with their veteran status with both students and school administrators when they receive support and aid for their special needs and challenges in language use in their new higher education environment.

Therefore, student veterans in the sample strongly identified as veterans, and were generally comfortable sharing their experiences at ASU, which opens up opportunities for comparisons, mutual respect, interactions, and the formation of relationships with fellow student veterans. When it comes to the interaction with non-veteran students or instructors, some were reluctant because they felt they will not be understood ors they may be treated differently.

Summary

The chapter answered the research questions by summarizing the findings of the current study and comparing and contrasting them to findings from past studies. While the literature indicates that student veterans experience challenges in language use, the findings of this study indicate that the majority of the participants in the study did not face these challenges in language use. The only challenge they mentioned was their transition to classes at ASU. Findings also suggested that student veterans feel comfortable identifying as students and veterans. They are, however, aware that people may treat them differently because of their veteran status and they are thus very intentional about how much to share with their instructors, veteran students, and non-veteran students.

CONCLUSION

When introduced to a new environment, people experience challenges because they have to learn new rules and expectations in language use. They need various strategies to enhance their flexibility and adaptability so that they can transition to the new environment successfully. The aim of the current study was to understand the process of transition from military life to academic life. Previous studies suggested that student veterans face challenges across social, academic, mental, and physical spheres. This mixed-method study focused specifically on challenges in language use.

The first research question of the study was: What kind of challenges do combat veterans experience in language use as they transition from military to civilian life in higher education? The findings suggested that most participants did not experience substantial challenges in language use, although there were some that could be attributed to the differences between military language and academic language. The findings also showed that these challenges decrease as student veterans learn more academic language and learn to "turn off" the military language. And student veterans who had college experience before joining the military had a slight advantage, having had experience using the academic language before. Students also mentioned that things got easier once they learned academic language. This seems to point to the role of language learning in the process of socialization (Sook Lee & Bucholtz, 2015).

The second research question of the study was: How do combat veterans present their identity as veterans in academic settings? Student veterans in the sample strongly identified as veterans and were generally comfortable sharing their veteran status with others at ASU, which opens up opportunities for comparisons, mutual respect,

interactions, and the formation of relationships with other student veterans. However, sometimes they hesitate to share their veteran status. They think it is too complicated to go deeper into conversation about the military experience because non-veteran students would not understand. They are also afraid that their instructors may treat them differently. This shows that student veterans understand the effects of their veteran status in their relationship with others and they carefully decide when and how they share their status with others

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The current study had some limitations that call for future research.

Number of Participants

One of the key limitations of the study is the limited number of participants. I had difficulties recruiting enough participants for both the survey and the interviews. This negatively affected the quality of the study. A smaller sample decreased the power of findings because it limited the options in statistical analysis. It also means that the findings may not be generalizable because only a small fraction of the target population was included in the study. One of the reasons for this limitation may be that student veterans were hesitant to disclose information about their military life or they felt vulnerable to link their experience to challenges they are facing. In future studies, mitigation strategies should be used. For example, first, researchers should fully disclose the purpose of the study to respondents to build a sense of trust. Secondly, researchers should assure participants that their anonymity is protected. This was done in the recruitment letter in the current study, but it may not have been enough to build enough trust between the researcher and the participants.

Target Population

The target population of this study was ASU student veterans, and it had its limitations. First, it was limited to ASU students. It was necessary in order to make the study manageable, but the limitation is that it is not possible to tell if the challenges found in the study are unique to ASU or apply to all academic contexts. In the future, similar studies should be conducted in other universities and community colleges.

Another limitation was that the population included only veterans. It did not include non-veteran students. It was so because the focus of the study was the experience of veteran students. However, because there was no control group, it is not possible to tell if the findings are unique to veteran students or if they apply to all students. Future studies should be conducted to compare and contrast between the two populations.

Self-Reported Data

Another limitation of the study is that the study relied exclusively on self-reported data from the participants. Even if participants were honest, there may be a gap between what they reported and what they actually experienced. This is a limitation of studies based on the survey and interview. In the future, research that studies the actual experience of veterans should be conducted so that it can verify the findings from the current study.

Questionnaire Design

There were also some limitations to the questionnaire. I tried to write questionnaire items carefully, based on previous literature and my own experience as a veteran. It is possible that the focus of the questions and wording of the questions were biased, and they highlighted certain types of challenges more than others or skewed the

data in some ways. If a similar study is conducted in the future, the instrument should be revised and made neutral. Also, open-ended questions or interviews can be used to address these limitations because participants can talk about issues the questionnaire does not cover.

Study on the Resource Center

One area the current study did not specifically explore but should be investigated more is the role of on-campus resource centers in student veterans' transition. Although universities are interested in supporting veterans and various services are provided through the resource centers, I did not find any study that investigated how resource centers can assist student veterans in language use. It would be useful to know how resource centers can help student veterans learn the academic language so that they can transition smoothly.

<div align="center">

Summary

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Student veterans who have recently returned from deployment are at a disadvantage when seeking to be part of their new civilian environment, especially in higher education institutions. It is incumbent upon society to facilitate their smooth transition based on their service to the country.

The current study adds insights to the pool of knowledge and practices regarding student veterans' transitions from a language perspective. The study illuminated challenges in language use that are often experienced in the transition from a military environment to a civilian environment. It also showed that such challenges are not beyond mitigation as long as the right environment and resources are available to assist

students. In other words, a smooth transition is a collaborative process that entails creating synergies between the school community and students.

It is my hope that the findings of this study help researchers and university administrators understand and appreciate student veterans' backgrounds and think through how the university can support student veterans' success. Higher education institutions can better equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills for employment and create awareness of the importance of accommodating different cultures and strengthening social ties among all students, including student veterans.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ASU | **Knowledge Enterprise Development**

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Aya Matsuda
CLAS-H: English
480/965-7504
Aya.Matsuda@asu.edu

Dear Aya Matsuda:

On 6/4/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Understanding the Challenges of Academic Language Use as Veterans Transition to Civilian Life in Higher Education
Investigator:	Aya Matsuda
IRB ID:	STUDY00014059
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• consent form survey.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Interview consent form.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Social Behavioral completed form.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Pat Tillman VC Assistant Director email of willing to work with me.pdf, Category: Other; • Recruitment email.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Survey questions and Interview questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 6/4/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Naji Obaid
        Naji Obaid

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Arizona State University

Interview Consent Form

Understanding Veterans' Experience in Higher Education

My name is Naji Obaid and I am a veteran graduate student under the direction of Professor Aya Matsuda in the Department of English at Arizona State University (ASU). I am conducting a research study to explore veterans' experience at ASU. I would like to invite you for an in-person interview that is expected to last 45-60 minutes. However, you are under no obligation to participate. I would also like to audio record this interview, with your permission. Please let me know if you do <u>not</u> want the interview to be recorded. You may also change your mind after the interview starts. Just let me know. The videos will be used for internal use only.

The main benefit of participating in this study is that, as a veteran, you may benefit from reflecting on your transition back to civilian life as a university student and from having your experiences heard. You may find it therapeutic to recount your experiences in the military and your transition to civilian life as an undergraduate student at ASU. The insights you contribute can also be used to design programs to better assist veteran students with the transition at ASU and other universities in the US.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with your participation. However, if the interview does raise traumatic memories, I am happy to provide you with resources from both on- and off-campus to address any distress you experience.

All audio recording files for the interviews will be stored in a secure password-protected computer and online server. I will assign pseudonyms or participant numbers to each person. The results of the study may be used in journal articles, but your name will not be used. De-identified data collected as a part of the current study will not be shared with other investigators for future research purposes. However, providing email will help me to contact the participant for the interview process only.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Dr. Aya Matsuda (aya.matsuda@asu.edu) or Naji Obaid (nobaid@asu.edu).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Arizona State University. You may talk to IRB staff at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

By signing below, you are agreeing to be part of the study.

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Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____	_____
Signature of participant	Date
_____	
Printed name of participant	
_____	_____
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
_____	
Printed name of person obtaining consent	

Document Revision Date: September 13, 2021

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APPENDIX C

SURVEY LETTER

Hello,

My name is Naji Obaid, and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at Arizona State University (ASU). I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about veterans' experience in higher education. As a fellow veteran attending ASU, sharing your experience can offer insights into the challenges veterans face while transitioning from military life into civilian life in general and in the higher education context in particular.

Your identity will be completely anonymous throughout the research process. The survey is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Please consider participating if:

- You are 18 years of age or older,
- You are an undergraduate student veteran of any branch of the United States armed forces, and
- You have taken at least one course at ASU

Please click on this link to complete the survey: Start Survey

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at nobaid@asu.edu.

Thanks for your consideration and thank you for your service!

Sincerely,
Naji Obaid

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Background

1. What is your gender?

   o Male

   o Female

   o Other

2. What is your age?

   o 18-24 years old

   o 25-34 years old

   o 35-44 years old

   o 45-54 years old

   o 55 and older

3. What is your branch of service?

   o Army

   o Air Force

   o Marine Corps

   o Navy

   o Coast Guard

4. Length of military service?

   o 1-3 years

   o 3-6 years

   o 6-12 years

- o 12-20 years

- o 20-40 years

5. How many semesters have you attended Arizona State University?

6. What is your major?

7. Do you have prior college experience before serving in the military?

- o Yes

- o No

8. Are you willing to be called for an interview? It is optional and voluntary to be called for 10-15 minutes interview.

- o Yes

- o No

Academic Experience and Language Use

1. As a recent veteran, starting classes at ASU was a big adjustment for me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Before starting classes, I wondered if I had enough academic skills and knowledge to do well at ASU.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I am confident that I am using appropriate academic vocabulary in my classes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I often ask my instructor for clarification during a lecture.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I generally understand academic concepts in written texts for my classes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. My non-veteran classmates understand the comments I make in class.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I often worry that my comments in class discussions are not clear to non-veteran students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. My experiences as a veteran are relevant to my role as a student.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I often communicate with my instructor during class.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. I often communicate with my instructor outside of class (by email, during office hours, or in some other form).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. I often speak to fellow students during class, either to discuss course material or to have informal conversations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I often communicate with fellow students outside of class, either to discuss course material or to have informal conversations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I am comfortable bringing up my military experiences as part of class discussions about academic topics.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I am comfortable sharing academic concerns with my instructor.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I am comfortable sharing veteran-related matters with my instructor (such as doctors' appointments or how my service has impacted my learning needs).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

16. I feel included in class discussions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. I communicate effectively in class.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

Identity as a Veteran

18. I strongly identify as a veteran.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

19. I generally feel comfortable being both a veteran and a student on campus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

20. I am comfortable publicly identifying as a veteran on campus in every

   situation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. I often share my veteran status with my instructors.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

22.   I often share my veteran status with my classmates.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. I often search out and use services on campus that are designed to serve

   veterans.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions:

What was your experience like enrolling for classes at ASU as a veteran?

Possible follow-up if the participant doesn't mention any challenges in language use:

Did you encounter any challenges in language use?

Have you ever felt that you did not possess the language skills to adequately participate in an academic conversation in your class?

Possible follow-up if the participant did not possess the language skills:

How did you overcome this type of challenge?

Have you ever felt that your use of military language caused a conflict or misunderstanding with a classmate?

Follow-up if unclear: Was it in class or other situations?

Follow-up if unclear: Was it with a veteran student or non-veteran student?

Follow-up if they only talk about one setting/population and you want them to talk about other things to: That's interesting! What about X? Have you experienced something similar with Y?

Have you ever felt that your use of military language caused a conflict or misunderstanding with your instructor?

Follow-up question if answering Yes: Tell me a time when using military language caused you a conflict.

How did you overcome this conflict?

Did you learn the X technique to overcome this conflict while in service or in classroom?

Follow-up question if answering No: Is that because you know the academic language and how to speak to your professor?

Have you ever tried to have a conversation about your veteran status with a classmate?

If they answer Yes: How did that conversation go?

If they answer No: Tell me why.

Have you ever tried to have a conversation about your veteran status with your instructor?

If they answer Yes: How did that conversation go?

Have you ever used services on campus that are designed specifically for veterans? If so, please describe your experiences.