University of Alberta

**Exploring Teachers' Pedagogy for English Language Learners
in Mainstream Classrooms**

by

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Abstract

In Alberta the influx of immigrants and refugee families from many countries has resulted in an increasing number of minority students entering mainstream classrooms. Students may have limited English skills and in some cases none at all. These students are only able to communicate in their first language. This situation is posing challenges for mainstream teachers in addressing the academic needs of these students. Teachers who are not versed in the student's first language are at a disadvantage. This study examined the pedagogy of three teachers who were teaching mainstream classes that contained at least 50% English language learners (ELLs). Teacher pedagogy related to teaching ELLs comprises a critical factor in facilitating student success in school.

The purpose of this study was to explore the pedagogy of three teachers who taught ELLs, how they adapted their instructional strategies, and the supports they deemed necessary to effectively teach ELLs. The research consisted of an interpretive inquiry case study conducted over a period of 3 months in the spring of 2011. Through one-on-one interviews, three teachers described the pedagogical approaches they used when teaching ELLs of varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds and experiences. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, field notes, and classroom observations, my own reflective research journal also provided data for the study.

In analyzing the data several themes were identified which were organized into three headings: (a) challenges faced by teachers, (b) instructional approaches employed by teachers, and (c) supports the participating teachers identified as

necessary for teaching ELLs. Recommendations are made in regard to university preparation programs for pre-service teachers, the need for ongoing in-services for practicing teachers, and increasing the resources for teachers to support their teaching of ELLs in mainstream classrooms.

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As I reflect on the process of completing this study I could not imagine completing it without the love and support of so many individuals whom I came in contact with over the last couple of years. The professors, graduate students, and the administrative staff within the Faculty of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta provided me with a nurturing environment to extend my learning. The knowledge gained from the courses I took and the academic conversations and friendships that I acquired were truly gratifying.

Next, I would like to thank the three teachers who participated in this study. Their commitment, flexibility of time, and willingness made this research project possible. I would also like to thank the principals for welcoming me into their schools and the school district for granting me permission to conduct this research study.

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Thank you to my parents who believed in education. I wish they were here to share in my accomplishments. I know they would be proud.

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I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth (Psalm: 121)

To God be the Glory

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter I share my personal background and interest that led me to this study of teachers of English language learners (ELLs). I also present recent statistics on immigration to Alberta and the consequent changing demographics in Alberta schools. After defining the term *English language learners*, I provide a general introduction to the study and to the Alberta provincial government documents that teachers are required to follow with respect to identifying the level of English language proficiency for ELLs, and for effectively helping teachers with programming. I address the linguistic rights of the individual and describe the complexity of the present situation regarding the issues involved in educating ELLs in Alberta schools. I draw upon the *Review of ESL K-12 Program Implementation in Alberta, Final Report* [*Howard Report*] (Howard Research & Management Consulting, Inc., 2006) in establishing the nature of the problem studied in this dissertation, and finally, I present the purpose and significance of the study as well as the research questions.

Personal Reflection

Shaun Tan's book *The Arrival* (2007) depicts an immigrant's story that speaks to all people who arrive in a new country in search of a better life and future. *The Arrival* is a wordless book organized with panels of pictures that illustrate the new and different environment that will become home for many who leave their country of origin. The book is a re-imagining of what was left behind and an exploration of the new realities of life. The visual images are open to

broad interpretation, which makes the book a personal experience that readers can relate to and through which they can reflect on their own life stories. The protagonist in *The Arrival* is overcome by feelings of strangeness as he arrives in a new land and tries to make sense of his perplexing new surroundings. In an uncertain environment, the immigrant meets others who offer help and embrace him in the land he hopes to call home. He accepts their graciousness and listens to their stories which provide hope and encouragement for him. The fact that the book is wordless portrays the immigrant's inability to understand the language of his new place. However, the immigrant can draw upon the pictures and symbols surrounding him to create his own meaning. The symbols and signs and unusual-looking characters provide images of unfamiliarity that engender understandings of what it is like to enter a new and different environment. The family picture the immigrant holds is a reminder of his motivation to eventually re-unite with his family to build a new life. It is indeed a story of hope.

In a way, the immigrant in Shaun Tan's book *The Arrival* (2007) portrays a similar story to that of my father when he arrived in Canada in 1967. He came with only a suitcase and everything was new to him. Language was not a barrier for my father as he spoke English and so was able to adjust more easily to his new surroundings than others might. He met people who offered him hospitality and made him welcome. Once my dad was able to get on his feet, he found a home for us and subsequently the whole family was able to re-unite with him. Although I never discussed with my dad the experiences he had when he first arrived in

Canada, I was fully aware that it was challenging for him until he was able to feel a sense of belonging in his new space. I can only imagine some of the thoughts, feelings, and ideas that must have gone through his mind with respect to making the decision to move to a new country. I sensed that moving to Canada was not easy for my parents, especially with six children. The reason my father came to Canada was to provide a better way of life for his family, and for his children to have an education. He saw Canada as a land of opportunity. There were many challenges for all of us such as adjusting to the weather, a different school system, and a new landscape. My dad worked hard to provide the best for his family and I certainly appreciated it. I recognized the opportunity he provided for us and as a career I chose to become an educator.

In the early years of my teaching career I taught mostly monolingual students. I remember one of my first teaching assignments was in a Grade 1 classroom in which I had four students of different ethnicity: two were Canadian-born students from Indian families and two were from the Caribbean. These students were able to speak English so there were no language barriers for them.

After teaching for a few years I returned to university to further my teacher education at the graduate level. I wanted to refine my teaching practice and subsequently took courses with the intent of becoming a reading specialist. Upon finishing my studies I returned to the classroom and continued teaching. The knowledge gained through my graduate program helped me to further my understanding and teaching practices and to improve in areas such as diagnosing

reading problems and providing appropriate programming for my students to be successful at school. As time progressed I gradually saw a demographic shift in my classroom. Many students were entering the classroom from a variety of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and spoke little or no English. This led me to wonder what the future of teaching was going to look like. My previous university education had not prepared me for the diversity I now faced in my classroom.

Eventually, I was seconded from my classroom by the school district to take on the role of reading specialist. During my first year in this role I worked at one of the field team offices assessing students in schools, working with teachers, and providing programming suggestions. The following year I was approached to work with a group of schools in the inner city. One of my aspirations was to work in the inner city and when this opportunity arose I decided to take it. In my daily work I recognized there was a high population of students who were English language learners, as many immigrant families settled in the inner city. Thus the schools there represented a mosaic of cultures. This presented many challenges for teachers. As I reflected on the situation I saw a need to return to university to further my education in this area and subsequently my focus was to engage in research related to ELLs. The demographics in classrooms across Alberta have changed dramatically over the years, and there is a great need for research about teaching ELLs, especially with respect to teacher education at both the pre-service and in-service levels.

Immigration into Canada

According to Statistics Canada (2011) the percentage of immigrants in the Canadian population increases each year. They estimate by 2017 approximately one out of every five people in Canada will be from a visible minority group. These trends are similar for Alberta which is projected to have approximately 8% of the total Canadian visible minority population by 2017. Given this projection the implication is that there will be more students entering the public school system with unique linguistic, social, and cultural needs. School boards have seen the numbers of students requiring English as a second language services grow significantly as can be seen in Tables 1 and 2 on pages 17 and 18. High concentrations of immigrants settle in the larger centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Immigrants are drawn to these larger centres because they find it easier to settle due to the social support networks of family and friends. With such an influx of immigration from different countries it is not surprising that Canada has become a mosaic of cultures. Each different culture brings a different language, customs, and way of life. Therefore there are many challenges for immigrants trying to adapt and fit into a new and dominant culture and learning the language becomes an essential mode of communication in the new environment.

Current Status of ELLs in Alberta

Today, Canadian schools are at a crossroads in trying to meet the needs of immigrant students. In Alberta in particular there is an increasing demand for

effective education for ELLs. A recent article in the Edmonton Journal highlights this trend in the town of High River, Alberta (Cuthbertson, 2013). Alberta has traditionally been a magnet for immigration and a disproportionate number of immigrants move to Alberta seeking work. The result is that an increasing proportion of the Alberta school population has a first language other than English, and those individuals either have to learn English from a very basic level, or need assistance to increase English skills to the level required for academic success (Wiltse, 2006). According to the *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006), "the current ESL (English as a second language) student population in Alberta is estimated at 37,300. Based on Citizenship and Immigration Canada data there are approximately 1,500 new arrivals to Alberta between the ages of 0 and 18 each month. The number of ESL students has been increasing by an average of 14% per year. New arrivals settle predominantly in Calgary (58% new arrivals) and in Edmonton (29 % new arrivals), with the remainder scattered throughout the province" (Government of Alberta, 2006, p. 1).

Historically, educational planning for language minority students was at the discretion of the education system, which employed an authoritarian decision-making approach. Often, such decision making did not address all aspects of the educational needs of the student, especially if there was an incomplete understanding of such needs. Cummins (1981) wrote,

Without a framework, decision makers are often unable to focus

consistently upon the psychosocial and educational factors that influence

the school achievement of language minority students. While political and

economic factors are also important, basing educational programs solely

on such grounds tends to affect negatively the quality of the educational

experience of language minority students. (p. ix)

The importance of time as a factor for minority students to become

proficient in English is often underestimated. Although it may superficially

appear that an ELL's oral language skills are fully developed, non-oral skills

(reading and writing) may lag behind. Therefore, it is important not to withdraw

support for ELLs too early. The inclination to mainstream ELLs prematurely into

regular classes is referred to as the "exit fallacy" (Cummins, 2001a, p. 129), and is

critical because it can have repercussions later as students progress through

school. It usually takes 5 to 7 years for a non-native speaker to develop their

English language skills (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1981) and can often take up to

10 years (Hakuta, Butler, &Witt, 2000). Other authors suggest a shorter period: 3

to 5 years to develop oral proficiency in English (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary,

Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Hakuta et al., 2000). Similarly, Cummins (2000)

stated that at least 2 years is required to reach peer levels in basic interpersonal

communicative skills (BICS) (i.e., conversational language) and 5 to 7 years to

acquire cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Oral language skills

develop faster than academic language skills, and therefore students appear to be

more proficient in the second language than they actually are: "this misconception operates to impede the academic progress of language minority students" (Cummins, 1981, p. 6).

English Language Learners

There are several identifiers that are used for persons who are actively learning English but whose family language is not English. In this study, the term "ELLs" will be used to refer to such students. The term ELL covers a wide range of situations. It includes but is not limited to such people as first generation immigrants, the children of immigrants born in Canada but whose parents do not speak English at home, refugees, international students, Canadian-born Francophones, and First Nations children whose family language is not English. From this variety of cultural and linguistic groups it is clear that ELLs are not comprised of a homogenous grouping but rather have complex linguistic and cultural backgrounds and a wide variety of linguistic, social, cultural, and academic needs.

Alberta Education Program Guides

It is apparent that in Alberta there is a large proportion of the school population that needs extra attention to education in English as a second language beyond their education in other subject areas. Such students may also need language support for learning other subject areas as well. Teachers faced with high numbers of students of diverse language backgrounds are challenged in providing appropriate programming to meet their needs. At the present time there

is no set curriculum for ELLs in Alberta. However, there is an ESL Program of

Study that is intended for senior high level students (Alberta Learning, 2002).

The reference document *Guide to Implementation K-9* (Alberta Education, 2007)

is also available as a guideline for teachers. The purpose of this latter document is

to assist teachers in helping them with the following:

- An understanding of who ESL students are and basic information
  about second language acquisition

- Suggestions for the reception, placement, and orientation of
  elementary and junior high school ESL students

- Information and sample strategies for establishing ESL
  programming and creating a successful ESL learning environment

- Effective instructional strategies, lessons, and activities specific to
  ESL students with varying levels of language proficiency

- Suggestions for the assessment and evaluation of student learning
  and progress. (Alberta Education, 2007)

More recently, the *K-12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks* (Alberta Education,

2010) has been developed to support programming for ELLs. The document

provides a means to support schools in delivering instruction and to support ELLs

in kindergarten and Grades 1 through 12. The *Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency

Benchmarks* are not just for designated ESL[1] teachers in schools; the benchmarks

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[1] ESL is used in this specific section because it is a term used in the *Alberta Proficiency Benchmarks* document.

are to be used by all teachers with ELLs in their classrooms. The benchmarks are provided to assist all teachers in making timely and effective instructional choices that enhance English language learning. These documents are general and do not provide a specific curriculum per se for ELLs. They support ELLs by helping teachers provide appropriate programming at their specific language ability level. The purpose of the *Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks* is to:

- provide descriptions of language proficiency for each grade-level division

- support schools in delivering effective instruction and program planning for English language learners by identifying initial language proficiency levels of students

- develop consistency in assessment of language proficiency for English language learners

- promote collaboration and communication about an English language learner's progress among all of the student's teachers

- support teachers in assessing, monitoring, tracking, and reporting language proficiency

- communicate with students and parents to develop an understanding of language acquisition

- plan for explicit language instruction within everyday classroom learning. (Alberta Education, 2010)

The purpose of the ESL Senior High Guide to Implementation is to:

- provide teachers with a clear understanding of who the ESL student is, as well as basic information about second language learning

- provide suggestions for the reception and orientation of senior high ESL students and the identification of language proficiency levels

- help teachers place students in the appropriate levels of the senior high school ESL program and provide appropriate activities

- help teachers and administrators plan for ESL programming that meets the needs of students in their schools and makes connections to Alberta's senior high school programs of study

- provide suggestions for effective and appropriate learning strategies and experiences at all levels of the ESL program

- Assess and evaluate student learning and progress in relation to the ESL senior high school program of studies. (Alberta Learning, 2002)

These guides are important because they provide valuable background to help teachers and administrators in implementing practical pedagogical knowledge to support programming for student learning.

Linguistic Rights of Language for Minority Children

It is important to note that education is generally recognized as the foundation of the development of the individual. Education is also the most important factor in the elimination of poverty (Cummins, 2000). It is generally accepted that educated people are more able to direct their own lives and contribute to society at large. Therefore education is one of the drivers of social

and economic growth, and it is in the interests of all countries to provide the best education possible for their populations. Language education is of paramount importance in enabling new immigrants to integrate and participate fully in their new culture.

With the globalization that has occurred in the last 20 years comes the movement and mixing of people from different countries, cultures, languages, and ways of life. This migration has had a significant social and educational impact as individuals settle in places where they need to integrate into a new culture. Such people are faced with many challenges, one of which is learning a new language. In Alberta, this new language is English because English language skills are a necessity for communicating with others in the province. Mohan, Leung, and Davison (2001) pointed out that, "Mastery of English provides individuals with a degree of power denied to those whose oral and written fluency is hesitant and uncertain" (p. 104). Schools are therefore challenged with providing appropriate language instruction for these new arrivals and recognizing the needs of culturally diverse students.

Government educational policy is crucial in recognizing and addressing the educational needs of all students in schools. For many decades Canadian teachers generally taught in monolingual classrooms. ELLs entering these classrooms were not recognized as having special needs and their education was not a priority. The current situation is radically different, as now there are students from many different language backgrounds in Alberta's classrooms.

However, the challenge is broader than just having students learn English as a second language. Waters (2001) pointed out that

> The refusal to see English as a second language (ESL) as only one part of a necessary holistic language learning goal—bilingualism or multilingualism—leads many scholars to argue that every government should guarantee basic linguistic human rights to all children in the educational system, in daycare centers, schools, and institutions of higher education. (p. 296)

The United Nations (1996) Draft *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* supports the linguistic rights of individuals, language communities, and language groups. The document recognizes the rights of ethnic minority groups to use their language as they desire. This draft declaration is not yet binding and at present it is up to each country to implement it as they see fit (May, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Ultimately it is hoped that this Declaration will become binding and all countries will act upon it.

The *Howard Report*

The *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006), published in Alberta in 2006, is the most recent assessment of the needs of Alberta's ELLs. The report is based on longitudinal data collected between October 2004 and September 2005 by Alberta Education. The purpose of the *Howard Report* was to find out how best to understand and support the needs of ELLs. Information from the study was intended to provide feedback to the

Ministry to assist decisions about curriculum development, allocating resources, and providing support for ELLs. The focus was on best practices in pedagogy, with data obtained from various sources. These sources included principals and teachers at different grade levels in different geographic locations within the province. Other experts consulted in the study were stakeholders and researchers. A synthesis of findings from the study provided information that identified factors which contributed to and predicted the academic needs of ELLs. A list of recommendations was provided to address the needs of K to 12 ELLs. The recommendations included responsive and stable funding, appropriate assessments to provide consistency in approaches to ELLs, appropriate programming and support, and training for pre-service teachers. Although this research was conducted with a small sample of schools, the results indicate that there are specific challenges at the present time in addressing issues of ELLs in Alberta schools. Several key findings were identified which help to shape the reflections and recommendations I make at the end of this dissertation. The key findings were:

- Stakeholders/experts were generally not in agreement with existing assessment tools and they pointed out the need for tools normed on Alberta students in order to provide consistency in assessment for placement purposes.

- Leadership must be provided for developing and providing strategies to improve instruction. First language support for ELLs is an important part

of these strategies, as first language proficiency translates into greater
success in second language acquisition.

- Integration of ELLs into mainstream classrooms too early can be
  problematic, and transitional programs need to be sustained for 5 or more
  years.

- There is a need for improved education of pre-service and in-service
  teachers. The report found that 27% of ELL designated teachers have no
  specific ELL preparation and for those teachers with ELL preparation, it is
  generally insufficient to meet the needs of these students.

- Ongoing teacher education in language acquisition, cultural competence,
  differentiated instruction, and ELL assessment is needed.

The *Howard Report* indicated that 5% of K to 12 ELLs in Alberta were refugees.
This is a significant sub-group of the ELL population because some of these
students may have a first language learnt in refugee camps. Often this is not a
recognized language, but rather an amalgamation of various languages spoken by
different ethnic groups who are forced together in such camps. It is often a local
oral construct with no written form. Some of the children in these camps have no
formal schooling, and for those who do, it may not be in a traditional language.
Such students, then, may not have any literacy skills in their first language and no
mental structures of formal language.

The findings of the *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management
Consulting Inc., 2006) have implications for how schools can begin to address the

challenges faced by ELLs. These challenges have to be addressed on several

levels: socially, politically, and culturally. Therefore, teachers who traditionally

taught a large number of native English speakers will now have to change their

pedagogy and beliefs to accommodate the needs of ELLs.

There are a number of items in the *Howard Report* (Howard Research &

Management Consulting Inc., 2006) that are relevant to my study. The

demographic information it contains helps to support the argument for teacher

preparation in teaching ELLs. I believe that fundamental to successful

implementation of many of the recommendations of the report are the pedagogy,

beliefs, and understandings of classroom teachers about ELLs. Teachers need not

only know specific strategies for teaching ELLs, but they also need to understand

language acquisition and the cultural backgrounds of their students. Teachers

need to be aware of the issues facing ELLs if they are to understand why certain

pedagogical approaches are more appropriate than others.

In October of 2009 the *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management

Consulting, Inc., 2006) was updated. In general, the update consisted of

additional reference material related to issues covered in the previous report.

However, one update that is relevant to this study concerns parent involvement.

The research literature strongly indicates that parental involvement is necessary in

order for parents to have a better understanding of the school environment and of

their own role in their children's education.

Statement of the Problem

Schools throughout Alberta are experiencing a change in demographics. Students from many different cultures are entering mainstream classrooms. Many of these students have limited English language skills. Among these students are individuals who are not well grounded or literate in their first language. Having to learn a second language is doubly challenging for them. ELLs are therefore at a disadvantage when entering monolingual mainstream classrooms. There is a need for teachers to become knowledgeable about teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students as the demographics change in Alberta's classrooms. There is a concomitant need to address English language teaching and learning with all pre-service teachers in teacher preparation programs. The preparation and ability of teachers to meet the needs of ELLs has significant implications for the overall success of ELLs in Alberta schools. With the recent demographic changes teacher education programs need to focus more on preparing teachers to meet the changing needs of diverse classrooms (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Phews, & Mijung, 2009). Most research studies have concentrated on student progress and have explored the processes through which ELLs learn English. Little is known about how mainstream teachers with no formal (and little informal) teacher education in teaching ELLs adapt their pedagogy and develop strategies for working with such students. This is partly because the number of ELLs in Alberta classrooms has risen dramatically over a relatively short period of time. Guo, Arthur, and Lund (2009) conducted a study with pre-

service teachers at the University of Calgary. Their findings indicated that the pre-service teachers thought that they were inadequately prepared to address the diversity encountered in the mainstream classroom.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 clearly demonstrate the demographic changes that are occurring in Alberta's schools, and throw into relief the challenges that mainstream teachers are facing. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 present data on the numbers of coded students in major districts in Alberta (information obtained from Assistant Superintendent, Educational Planning, Edmonton Catholic School District, B. Radyo, personal communication, September 2012; Calgary Catholic School District, C. Schmidt, personal communication, September 2012; System Assistant Principal, Calgary Board of Education, P. Kover, personal communication, September 2012; and Edmonton Public School Board, L. Farrugia, personal communication, September 2012).

Coded students are students who come from homes where the primary language spoken is not English and who speak minimal English or who are non-English speaking (Alberta Education, 2007). The data in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 clearly indicate the ongoing increase in numbers of ELLs in both of Alberta's two largest school districts. They are also representative of the trend throughout the province. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 demonstrate that the increase in numbers is persistent from year to year from 2005 onwards.

Figure 1.1 *Coded ELLs in Separate School Boards, Calgary and Edmonton*
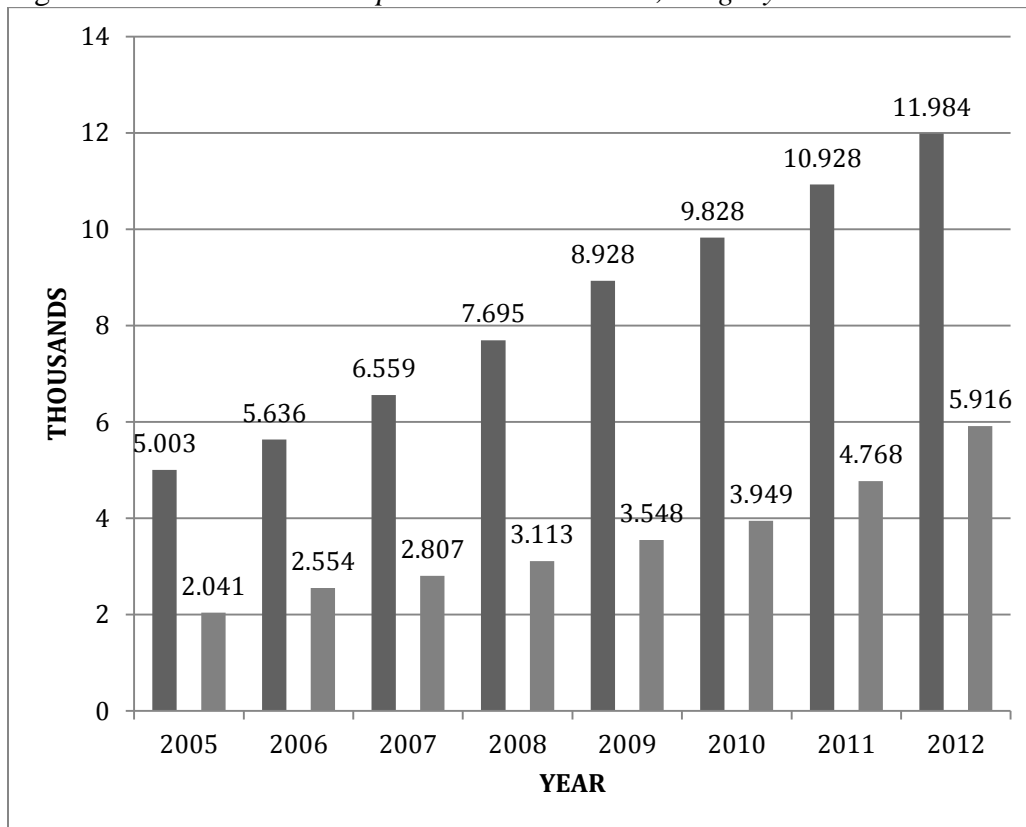
Note. Calgary Separate School Board is in dark grey. Edmonton Separate School Board is in light grey.

Figure 1.2 *Coded ELLs in Calgary and Edmonton Public School Board*
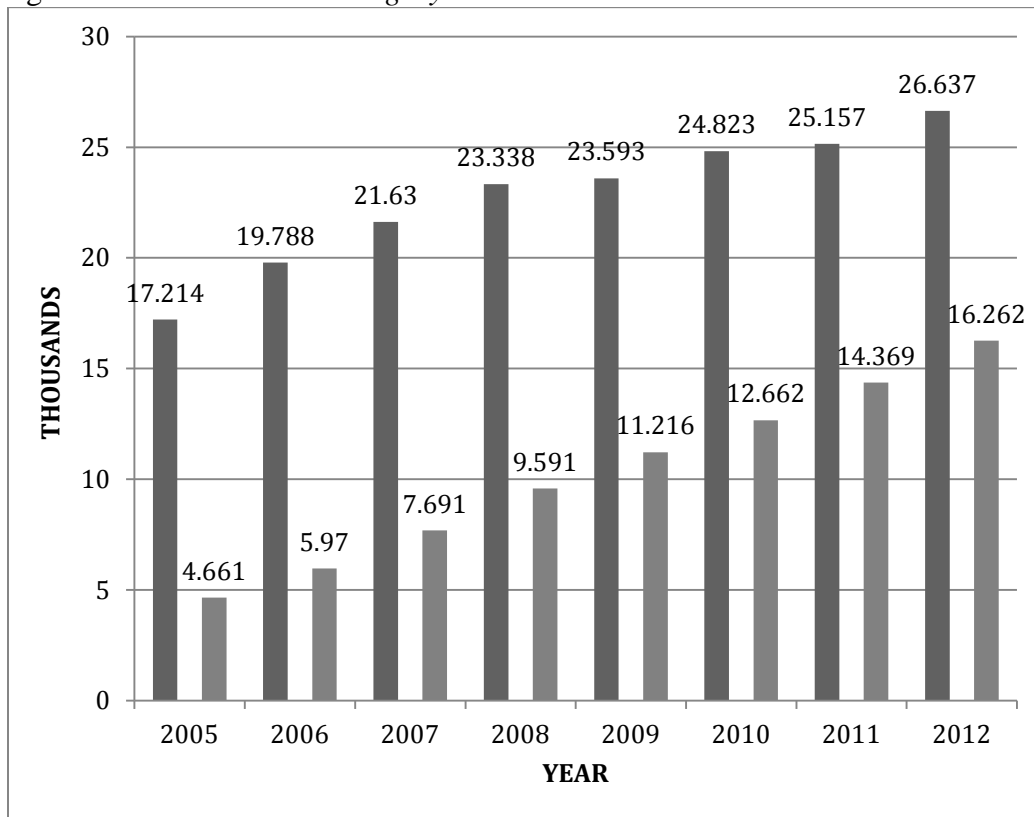
Note. Calgary Public School Board is in dark grey. Edmonton Public School Board is in light grey.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the pedagogy of three elementary school teachers in teaching ELLs in mainstream classrooms in an urban area of central Alberta. The term pedagogy is defined as "the art, science and profession of teaching" (Pedagogy, n. d.). This study aims to offer insights into how teachers adapt their pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies for ELLs. It also aims to provide information that will assist teacher educators to effectively meet the needs of Alberta's diverse school population. The study

attempts to uncover the nature and quality of supports perceived as necessary by the participating teachers to help them more effectively teach ELLs.

The study is an interpretive case study (Merriam, 1998) that focused on teachers who worked in an urban school district in Alberta. The study explored the teachers' pedagogy as it related to the challenges they faced within classrooms that contained a mixture of native English speakers and more than 50% of ELLs. This research study aimed to further develop knowledge and understanding about teaching ELLs and provide information that can be used to improve the effectiveness of teachers who work with ELLs in their classrooms. As part of the process of determining how to improve the effectiveness of teachers of ELLs, it is necessary to examine what supports are needed by teachers to help them improve their teaching effectiveness. This study has implications for teacher education at both the pre-service and in-service levels.

Abbreviations Used in This Dissertation

BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

EA – Educational Assistant

ESL – English as a Second Language

ELLs – English Language Learners

HLATs – Highest Level of Achievement Tests

PATs – Provincial Achievement Tests

SCT – Sociocultural Theory

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

Research Questions

1) How do teachers in mainstream classrooms develop their pedagogical approaches for teaching English language learners?

2) How do teachers adapt their instructional strategies to support students who are English language learners?

3) What supports do teachers in mainstream classrooms require in order to effectively teach English language learners?

Significance of the Study

As a result of changing demographics and immigration into Canada, ELLs are increasing in numbers in mainstream classrooms. For the purpose of this dissertation, mainstream classrooms are defined as "classes usually taught by teachers who have not been trained to work with limited language learners" (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002, p. 6). The need for a change in pedagogy to accommodate ELLs is becoming acute.

By analyzing and understanding teachers' pedagogy, it may be possible to identify some of the needs in teacher professional development (PD) in regard to teaching ELLs. The need to examine teacher preparation in this area is a pressing issue. The outcomes of this study will be useful in identifying the type of teacher knowledge that can influence pedagogy in teaching ELLs, and thus it may influence teacher education programs.

The topic of the dissertation is important because students from many different cultures enter mainstream classrooms in Canada. Significant numbers of these students either cannot speak English or have limited English skills. These students generally spend most of their time in mainstream classrooms and yet their teachers are inadequately prepared to effectively meet their educational needs. This has a significant impact on helping ELLs to develop their second language learning.

In summary, this study explores the challenges outlined in the *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006). As demonstrated in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, the growing numbers of ELLs in Alberta schools present a significant challenge to mainstream teachers. In Chapter two of this dissertation I present the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted using a sociocultural theoretical (SCT) framework in order to understand teacher pedagogy and to explore how teachers facilitate language learning for ELLs in mainstream classrooms. Sociocultural theory was first developed by Vygotsky (1978), a Russian psychologist whose work centered upon explaining the development of the mind. His theory is significant as it implies that the role of the teacher is primary in cultivating students' learning. Vygotsky saw learning as a social practice. His theoretical perspective helps educators in understanding the importance of interaction among teachers and students in the milieu of the classroom. Vygotsky was concerned with how individuals learn and how they develop their cognitive abilities within social contexts.

Sociocultural Theory

Specifically, Vygotsky (1978) was concerned with how humans learn: therefore his sociocultural theory is directly applicable to the educational process. Vygotsky's theoretical framework was based primarily on Marxism. "Vygotsky clearly viewed Marxist thought as a valuable scientific resource from very early in his career" (Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 6). There are three basic themes that are derived from Vygotsky's writings. They are: genetic or developmental analysis, the idea that higher mental function develops from social life, and the use of tools and signs to mediate human action (Wertsch, 1991). These themes directed Vygotsky's thinking about the psychological and social nature of learning.

Vygotsky made a distinction between two levels of psychological functioning. The first level he calls elementary, which is biologically determined. The second, which is higher structure, is based on signs and tools and mediation through cultural experiences.

Central to Vygotsky's (1978) theory is social interaction in which learners engage in meaningful constructive activities that are fundamental to their cognitive development through interaction with others. "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level: first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (p. 57).

Vygotsky (1978) believed that this interaction occurred through "the use of signs as well as tools" (p. 7). He theorized that these signs and tools, which included language, writing, and number systems, were responsible for bringing about change in human behavior and consciousness over time and within a particular culture by mediating interaction between individuals and between people and their environment. Vygotsky referred to the inter-psychological and the intra-psychological development of the individual's learning as a concretization of the two levels which he "believes is present throughout the entire span of a human life" (p. 128).

The zone of proximal development is a concept developed by Vygotsky (1978) to explain the place where learning occurs. The ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Vygotsky's (1978) contribution to the field of psychology took learning theory in new directions. Up to this point it was generally believed that learning and development occurred at the same time. Vygotsky suggested that development lags behind learning and that various mental processes must take place before learning becomes development. It is this process that he calls internalization.[2] The individual internalizes what is learned which results in development of higher mental function. Vygotsky emphasized that good instruction is aimed at what a person cannot do at present in contrast to what they are currently able to do. According to Vygotsky (1978), with the help of a more skilled person, a child accomplishes a task that he or she cannot do alone (Gee, 1992).

Scaffolding is a concept first presented by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). It was implied in Vygotsky's (1978) work, specifically by the ZPD, but required further development which occurred conceptually with the introduction

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[2] Internalization is the process by which an individual appropriates the speech of others, subjects it to mental processes, and then adopts it to become their own. According to Vygotsky's theory, it is through internalization that individuals are able to socialize and shape how they function with others.

of the analogy of a building scaffold, which gave it its name. Scaffolding

represents the helpful interactions between adult and child that enable the child to

do something beyond his or her independent efforts. A scaffold is a temporary

framework that is put up for support and access to meaning and is taken away

when the child is successful with a task (Walqui, 2006). While scaffolding is

necessary for all students to develop higher level learning, this concept is of

significant importance for ELLs because it takes a dynamic and challenging

approach to their learning. The teacher's job is to scaffold the learning task from

what the student can currently do alone and move the student along a continuum

that challenges them to eventually complete the task on their own. The teacher

has to be aware of what the student is capable of doing in order for them to

achieve success at their own pace (i.e., scaffolding is based upon careful

observation and on the teacher knowing when to intervene so that the learning is

not too far beyond the student's current ability). Scaffolding has advantages in

supporting the learning process: "students who learn with the assistance of

scaffolding in socially constructed environments will have an advantage over

students who do not" (Roehler & Cantlon, 1997, p. 39). Scaffolding, when

properly employed, avoids the temptation to simplify a learning task making it

less challenging for students. It is the quality of the scaffold, not simplicity, that

is important (Gibbons, 2002).

Gibbons (2006) presented an extensive discussion of scaffolding. She

outlined four stages: the first stage is review and orientation. This involves

foregrounding prior experiences in which the teacher provides an anchor for new learning. In the second stage the teacher sets up the new task by indicating to the students what the task is about and the process they will use to do it as well as how it will be completed. Stage three involves actually doing the task. In stage four the students reflect on the task and attempt to make sense of what has been done. Teachers who employ these various stages for scaffolding their students' learning provide an authentic and effective learning experience for their students.

Vygotsky's (1978) work emphasized the importance of *language* in mediating thought. "The acquisition of language can provide a paradigm for the entire problem of the relation between learning and development. Language arises initially as a means of communication between the child and the people in his environment" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89). Only after children use language for external communication do they begin to use it for internal communication. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that through the particular tool of speech, individuals can control how they interact with others and learn about their environment: "speech acts to organize, unify and integrate many disparate aspects of children's behavior, such as perception, memory, and problem solving" (p. 126).

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) noted the important distinction between sociocultural theory and constructivism by pointing out that constructivism is largely concerned with how learners interact with the world in acquiring knowledge, while the SCT approach characterizes learning as social, cultural, and historical in nature. Packer and Goicoechea provided an overview of the debate

between the constructivist and SCT ways of learning and showed that the debate had, until recently, been based on differences in epistemology. However, Packer and Goicoechea demonstrated that each perspective also had a different ontological consideration, and they argued that ontological concerns are an important and overlooked part of the debate. They examined the role of ontology in this debate and discussed differences in the hidden ontological assumptions of the two perspectives on learning.

Constructivisim was developed largely by Piaget (1972), whose work built upon that of Kant and Descartes. Constructivism is dualist in nature while the sociocultural perspective is non-dualist. The dualist orientation takes the standpoint that the person and the environment are separate, whereas the non-dualist orientation sees the individual as socially constructed and changing historically over time and therefore not separate from the environment. Piaget added the concept of development to the dualist ideas of constructivism, arguing that the knower is an active agent in an independent world. The two realms of the subject and the independent world form a dualist ontology. Both Piaget and Kant considered the individual as essentially unchanged by learning. In constructivist theories, the individual interacts with the environment and the "focus [is] on the active character of the learner" (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000, p. 228). The sociocultural perspective on learning, on the other hand, sees learning as a social activity that is both psychological and social and which changes the learner. This is a non-dualist ontology. Learning is viewed as socially constructed within a

community. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) pointed out that the sociocultural approach to human cognition is historically rooted in the philosophy of Vygotsky, Marx and Hegel.

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) recognized the connection between the two perspectives despite differences in their approaches to understanding learning. They suggested that reconciliation of constructivist and sociocultural perspectives is necessary. They reviewed a number of studies that, rather than viewing the two approaches as mutually exclusive, suggested ways in which they complement each other and are probably two parts of the same whole, "Learning entails both personal and social transformation—in short, ontological change" (p. 235). The viewpoint of complementarity of approach was also expressed by Zuengler and Miller (2006).

Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning

Research into cognition in language learning, and thus the effect of cognition on second language acquisition and learning, has dominated the research field over the last four decades. Studies in teaching ELLs have generally focused on second language acquisition (SLA). There is no one clear theoretical approach to second language acquisition, and in fact there are many approaches taken in current academic discussions. This is a significant area of debate between scholars in one camp who feel that the area of second language acquisition suffers from too many theoretical approaches (Beretta, 1991) and others who see the current situation as advantageous to a broad forward

movement (Block, 1996; Van Lier, 1994). The former argues for the need for a

single theory of SLA (Beretta, 1991, 1993), pointing out the benefits that single

theoretical approaches have had in the natural sciences. At the same time, there is

also a debate between those who take a cognitive approach and those who

advocate a sociocultural approach to language learning (Atkinson, 2002; Firth &

Wagner, 1997; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). The

cognitive approach and its associated quantitative research methods have

traditionally been dominant and remain so in SLA today, although the cognitive

approach is not as widely accepted as it was in the past and is criticized by many

researchers (Fenstermacher, 1986).

Lantolf and Thorne (2006) provided a brief historical overview of

language acquisition by pointing out that during the 1950s psycholinguists were

mainly concerned with language acquisition. The second generation of

psycholinguists in the 1960s centered their approach on abstract rules. This

generation of researchers saw language learning more from a linguistic

perspective than from a psychological point of view. Furthermore, language was

not considered at this time as a means of communication but rather as an

academic activity. As such it was looked upon in isolation with no reference to

speaking and listening as a way of communicating in society at large. The third

generation of psycholinguists became focused more on the psychological

processing of language and how it would be used in studying language and

communication. They argued that language learning and teaching is about

communication in a social situation or through mediation and they were concerned with its implications for developing higher mental functions within the individual.

There are three broad theoretical views that attempt to explain how language is acquired. The first of these is the behaviourist school from the early 1940s and 1950s which held that learning a language is based on imitation and practice. The behaviourist approach led the teacher to focus on the more difficult structures which when applied to learning a second language meant concentrating on areas of difference (Mitchell & Miles, 2004). However, the behaviorist approach was unable to explain the fact that children acquire their own rules as they learn and use language. Therefore, this view provided only a partial understanding of language development. A second theoretical approach is that of Chomsky (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999) and is known as the innatist view. This approach posited that language development is biological (i.e., there is an inherent language acquisition device in the human brain which contains universal principles of language and which is activated when children start to use their native language) (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). In essence, this theory implied that children have a natural capacity to learn a language with little or no formal instruction. Chomsky (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999) argued that the behaviorist view is incomplete because it is not possible to imitate language in all potential situations as implied by the behaviorists. The innatist view of language development presented a paradigmatic shift in linguistics, and more

specifically in the burgeoning field of SLA. Innatist research did not focus on the individual doing the learning, but rather the emphasis was on the language being learned.

The interactionist position on language development is the third major theoretical approach and it emphasizes interaction between the child and the environment. This view is associated with theorists such as Piaget (1972) and more importantly Vygotsky (1978). Interactionists believe that the cognitive development of language is based on the physical interaction between a child and adult and the use of language in this interaction. Vygotsky's theory became known as sociocultural and in general terms proposed that language learning develops in the interaction between the child and adult and that mental processes develop from this. As a result, the emphasis was not so much on language itself but more on the learner, the opposite of the innatist approach, thus changing the way language research was conducted (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Within a sociocultural theoretical framework there are a number of approaches that attempt to explain the acquisition of a second language. At present no one theory predominates but those of Krashen (1982), Cummins (2000) and, more importantly, Vygotsky are relevant to this study.

Krashen (1982) provided a framework for how a second language is acquired. He outlined five hypotheses and described how each one relates to language learning. Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses are the acquisition–learning

distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input

hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

The Acquisition–Learning Distinction is the most fundamental of all the

hypotheses presented in Krashen's (1982) theory and is known widely in the

research literature. Krashen's (1982) concept of language acquisition is a direct

application of Vygotsky's (1978) insight that development takes place in and

results from an individual's social experience. According to Krashen (1982)

language is acquired in two distinct ways. The first is subconscious acquisition

(i.e., it is similar to what children undergo when they are first learning a

language). This requires meaningful interaction in the target language. It is the

natural way in which an individual concentrates more on communication rather

than on the form of the language. The second method of acquisition is through

learning the language to be competent in it (i.e., learning the grammar/rules in a

formal way, which is related to a conscious level of knowledge of the language).

The acquisition mode is the most important way by which individuals learn both

their native language and a second language.

The Natural Order Hypothesis states that language acquisition of

grammatical features follows a "natural order" which is predictable. Some

features for a given language tend to be acquired early while others are acquired

later. This depends on how the learner acquires the language independently and is

based on variables such as age, background, and exposure to the language.

The Monitor Hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning. Acquisition initiates our speech in a second language while learning is the monitor that edits what we say after it is been formed in the mind but before it is spoken. The monitor function is more related to grammar and is more practical in nature while the acquisition "initiates the utterances and is responsible for fluency" (Krashen, 1982, p. 15). There is some question as to how much use is made of the monitor in normal speech. It requires time in order to think about grammatical rules and also requires knowledge of those rules. The monitor is probably not heavily used except during actual grammar tests.

The Input Hypothesis is another viewpoint as to how the learner acquires a second language. The basis of the input hypothesis is that meaning is obtained first followed by structure. This is actually the reverse of much thinking about second language acquisition. The input hypothesis relates to *acquisition*, not *learning* and states that we acquire by understanding the meaning of language that is just beyond our current ability by using context to make sense of what is being said. The input hypothesis has a resemblance to Vygotsky's ZPD. In the input hypothesis the learner receives language input that is just beyond their current stage of competence. Although this appears to be similar to Vygotsky's concept of learning taking place in the ZPD, the input hypothesis differs in that it emphasizes one-way communication from the teacher to the student, not two-way social interaction. Therefore, although *i*+1 looks like ZPD, they are different in nature.

Lastly, the *Affective Filter Hypothesis* suggests that there are a number of affective variables that influence how language is acquired: motivation, having a positive attitude, and low anxiety. According to Krashen (1982), a learner who possesses these qualities is in a better position to experience success in second language acquisition. In a situation when the filters of low motivation, high anxiety, and low self-esteem are present, comprehensible input is impeded, thus making it difficult to acquire the language. While positive affect is necessary, on its own it is not sufficient for language acquisition to take place.

Toohey, Day, and Manyak (2007) examined the theoretical and empirical research that helps to provide understanding of how children acquire a second language. They pointed out that the classroom is a complex environment, and indicated how individuals may acquire information and develop skills in language through a number of different methods. One way in which language skills are acquired through a process called mediated action involves Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in which students work collaboratively with competent others: adults and more capable peers. Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) is a particular mediated practice that sees the learner interacting with others at different entry levels in social practice. Another mediated practice is that of privileging which helps to explain the experiences and the resources used in the classroom for ELLs. The authors pointed out that while mediated practices enhance learning in the sociocultural context, they fall short in

accounting for the social, historical, cultural, and political aspects that impact the classroom.

Lantolf (2000) pointed out that, "the most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated" (p. 1). He further stated that based on Vygotsky's theory, symbolic tools and signs are central in mediating our relationship with others, and can change over time. Artifacts such as tools and symbols created within a culture can be modified as they pass from one generation to another. The most important of these tools is language, which the individual uses as a means of communication with others. Through social interaction the individual internalizes language, resulting in higher mental functions. Speech is used as a primary function for communicating: "it serves to establish social contact, carry out social interactions, and coordinate in social encounters or joint activities" (p. 14).

Lantoff (2000) emphasized Vygotsky's theoretical approach:

Internalization is in essence the process through which higher forms of mentation come to be. Internalization then assumes that the source of consciousness resides outside of the head and is in fact anchored in social activity. At first the activity of individuals is organized and regulated (i.e., mediated) by others, but eventually, in normal development, we come to organize and regulate our own mental physical activity through appropriation of the regulatory means employed by others. At this point

psychological functioning comes under the voluntary control of the

person. (pp. 13–14).

Lantolf (2002) pointed out that there are two branches in sociocultural

theory. The first branch holds that learning is mainly mediated linguistically and

is focused around communication. The second branch is activity theory, which

has not been as active an area in SLA research. Activity theory is a framework

that explains mediation as being embedded in the experiences of the society, its

culture, and the individual. Arising from the debate between scholars regarding

the cognitive and sociocultural approaches, a number of researchers now argue for

alternative approaches, reconceptualization, or a new synthesis of the SLA field

(Hall, 1997; Swain & Deters, 2007; Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Zuengler & Miller,

2006).

Lantolf (2007) wrote that "sociocultural theory is not a theory of language,

language learning, or language processing . . . it is a theory that unites human

social activity and human mental activity through communication" (p. 699). The

implication of this is that SCT goes far beyond cognition and is based on analysis

of daily experiences with others within a given culture, rather than on

experimentation. The result of the integration of these concepts for language

teaching is that the development of the student, the pedagogy of the teacher, and

the internal processes of learning are all linked. In essence, the sociocultural

approach recognizes that these are all one and the same activity.

Zuengler and Miller (2006) used the metaphor of a cake to illustrate the relationship between cognitive and sociocultural research in second language acquisition. In this metaphor the cake refers to the cognitive aspect of research while the icing refers to the social. By way of this metaphor, they indicated that the emphasis is still on cognition, even today. Zuengler and Miller (2006) also provided some insights from recent research to illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences with respect to SLA and sociocultural theory. They examined each approach by providing some background information and distinguishing between SLA and sociocultural theory. SLA theory is focused on individual development in learning a language, which is accomplished independently. While the two share some similarities in terms of cognitive processes, the main emphasis in sociocultural theory is on development of the mental processes in collaboration with others.

Zuengler and Miller (2006) examined the development of SLA in the light of sociocultural debates on learning. They characterized developments in the SLA field over the previous 15 years based on ontological beliefs. They covered similar concepts to Packer and Goicoechea (2000), noting that historically SLA research took a positivistic approach based on the scientific method: "the SLA process was considered, almost unanimously to be an internalized, cognitive process" (p. 36). Research carried out in the field was historically empirical in nature, objective, and measurable. The focus was more on an individual's internalization of a language rather than on the social aspect of learning. In

contrast, the emphasis in the sociocultural perspective is more on social interaction and development of the higher mental processes.

Day (2002) addressed many of the same issues. SLA research had traditionally concentrated on the linguistic development of the individual with respect to learning a language. This approach had roots in the idea that language is innate and that learning a language is based on mental constructs such as aptitude, motivation, or learning styles. More recently, other researchers have considered the social and cultural aspects of language learning but this still remains on the periphery of the discipline.

Day (2002) pointed out that during the 1980s researchers were concerned with the individual's ability to learn a language, which requires them to engage in dialogue. Researchers argued that interaction between individuals results in the negotiation of meaning and the understanding of language. These researchers indicated that SLA needs to be re-conceptualized to include a broader perspective. More recent research in learning a second language supports the notion that both the sociocultural and second language acquisition aspects of instruction are important. While the latter phenomena have usually been studied in isolation, researchers are recognizing the need for the integration of both SCT and SLA for students to adequately learn a second language. Different epistemological and ontological beliefs appear to be the major source of disagreement and debate among researchers in this field. While the positivists claim that learning a language is strictly an individual mental process, relativists believe that both

cognitive and social processes are required to successfully learn a second language.

Overall, with respect to the application of sociocultural theory in teaching and learning, a major role of school is to provide a social context for learning: "sociocultural theory maintains that social interaction and cultural institutions, such as schools, classrooms, etc., have important roles to play in an individual's cognitive growth and development" (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 453).

Cummins' Framework: BICS and CALP

Cummins (2000) was influenced by Vygotsky in recognizing the importance of social interaction in second language learning. Most ELLs learn to speak English with some proficiency, and may even be fluent in oral English. However, this is very often an appearance of greater proficiency than is actually the situation. This phenomenon is explained by the concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2001a). BICS are the common language skills that students use in everyday life and on the playground. They are the basic conversational skills developed in either a first or a second language, and when acquired are responsible for giving the appearance of familiarity with a second language. BICS is necessary for ELLs to communicate both with their peers and their teacher and are easier to develop because they can be practiced in everyday life and at home. They connect home, school, and society at large and foster communication for a variety of purposes. CALP on the other hand is higher level

language that helps in acquiring the cognitive language skills necessary to understand content or core academic subject vocabulary. CALP is therefore generally restricted to the school environment. Therefore it is CALP that is required for academic success. CALP is an academic skill and is therefore more demanding, is not overtly evident, is less readily acquired than BICS, and takes much longer to develop. Cummins (1981) uses the metaphor of an iceberg to illustrate the concepts of BICS and CALP. BICS is the tip of the iceberg, the part we can see, the conversational language. CALP, academic language, is the part we cannot see, and is of much greater importance in school achievement.

Cummins (2001b) built on the reports of literacy that he reviewed and then went on to use the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development to explain how second language learners can be taught. He argued that knowledge is constructed together by students and educators within the student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The ways in which the zone of proximal development is utilized can be positive or negative depending on the method of teaching. Cummins (2001b) went on to advocate the use of this approach over what he called the coercive power of relation in which educators dictate the method of instruction. The coercive power of relation refers to "the exercise of power by a dominant group (or individual or country) to the detriment of a subordinated group (or individual or country)" (Cummins, 2001c). In a classroom situation the coercive power of relation can be reflected in teacher pedagogy and how it is perceived by the students.

Cummins (2001d) pointed out that students who are empowered and have a positive experience in school are able to succeed. On the other hand, those students who are disempowered are at a disadvantage and are usually unsuccessful in school. He suggested that the reason why minority students fail to perform well in school is because of the differences in power status between minority groups and the majority group. The answer provided by Cummins (2001d) and supported by research data is that minority languages must be integrated within the school program and minority cultures valued in the classroom. In such situations, minority students will perform well. The very thing that is perceived as a disadvantage to minority students, if given value, becomes an advantage for them. In minority communities that are dominated by a majority, when students are empowered in the school context and where educators are seen as partners in education the result is a positive educational experience.

What can be done to help those who are disempowered? Cummins (2001d) developed a theoretical framework to guide the empowerment of disadvantaged students. His framework mediates empowerment in the following ways: at the individual level, minority students' language and culture must be valued through incorporation into the school program; at the school/community level, minority community participation is to be encouraged as an integral component of childrens' education; pedagogy must promote intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and professionals involved in assessment have to become advocates

for minority students and point out the problem at the school level rather than

legitimizing the location of the problem in the students.

Educators teaching ELLs need to be aware of the implications of BICS

and CALP for their students. These are predictors of future learning that, in

conjunction with the age of the student on arrival in Canada, can assist teachers in

developing programs for individual students. Roessingh and Kover (2003)

illustrated several learner profiles of ELLs, and demonstrated how their degree of

development of BICS and CALP affects their future academic success. Younger

arriving and Canadian-born ELLs face the challenge of learning their first

language as well as English and they often only reach a low plateau of functioning

in *both* languages. They have BICS but no CALP in both, and it can be deceiving

in that they appear on the surface to be fluent in both languages. "ESL students of

this profile are at high risk for academic failure" (Roessingh & Kover, 2002, p. 6).

A group of such students will likely develop the second language as the dominant

language, but have greater difficulty in doing this because they do not have the

development of the first language to fall back on. They may eventually master

CALP in English but do not further develop their first language skills. Students

arriving in Canada in the junior high years have some degree of CALP in their

first language, and may also have some English from their previous schooling in

their country of origin. These students are at risk in that they do not have the

necessary CALP in English and yet have to work in more academically advanced

situations. They have a shorter time available to catch up academically before

writing examinations that will affect their university entrance. Yet another group of ELLs arrive from the Pacific Rim countries at age 15 to 16. These students have only 3 years in which to close the language gap if they are to get into university. They have an advantage in that they have a greater CALP in their native language that will help them to more quickly develop CALP in English. These students have a good chance of academic success (Roessingh & Kover 2003).

A concerted effort on behalf of teachers to find ways to use CALP more commonly and in various different situations is required. Some native English speakers have the opportunity to develop CALP at home, depending upon parental level of education and communicative abilities. On the other hand, few ELLs have similar opportunities. Gibbons (2002) emphasized that CALP is best developed when integrated with content: "teaching programs in all curriculum areas must therefore aim to integrate language and content, so that a second language is developed hand in hand with new curriculum knowledge. This is not a straightforward task" (p. 6). A thematic approach, as suggested by a number of researchers (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Lipson, Velcencia, Wixson, & Peters, 1993), is beneficial in achieving and maximizing the academic language skills of both native speakers and ELLs (Hadaway, 2009). Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002) suggested that, "vocabulary acquisition and development is most effective when it is appropriately contextualized, that is, taught in contexts that are natural, functional, and of immediate interest and use" (p. 97).

Children who already know how to speak a first language well have an advantage in learning a second language. Therefore the transfer from the first language to the second language helps the student to acquire the second language more easily (Collier, 1989; Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007; Cummins, 1981, 2000; Gersten, 1996; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Karathanos, 2010; Reese, Garnier, Gallinmore, & Goldenberg, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The research literature generally indicates better performance in acquiring a second language if a student is allowed to use their first language to support learning a second language in the classroom. Waters (2001) provided a case study that demonstrated significantly better performance by ELLs in bilingual classes versus those in English immersion in regular education classes. Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) conducted a study with university ELLs that investigated this phenomenon in more depth. They studied the amount of first language use as well as the functions of the first language while completing a task in English. They found that use of the first language in this setting could be useful and postulated that the ELLs may have been extending their zone of proximal development in doing the task. It is interesting to note that although the students were allowed to use their first language, they generally chose to do so in only limited circumstances. The authors do qualify their findings by noting that their study was conducted in a laboratory setting and should be followed-up in a regular classroom. Thomas and Collier (2002) reported a study which found that a socioculturally supportive school environment for ELLs that "allows natural

language, academic, and cognitive development to flourish in both L1 and L2, comparable to the sociocultural support for ongoing language, academic, and cognitive development that native-English speakers are provided in school" (p. 324) results in successful second language development.

Padilla (2006) noted that content material is transferred by an ELL from one language to another without any requirement to learn the material separately in each language. Good literacy skills in a first language have been demonstrated to decrease the time to acquire English (Fu, 2004). Similarly Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000) stated that "Much of the knowledge students have about the processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in their native languages can and will transfer to English, making the task of learning English that much easier" (p. 260). While this seems intuitive it does suggest that there is little danger for an ELL to work, at least to some extent, in their native language while learning English. Cook (2001) surveyed the traditional reasons given for not including the first language in the classroom and then provided a comprehensive discussion of the ways in which the first language can be used to great advantage by the teacher. According to Cook (2001) the advantages of this approach of using the first language in the classroom far outweigh the supposed advantages of not using it. Similarly, Thomas and Collier (1997) concluded that, "L1 cognitive and academic development is a key predictor of academic success in L2" (p. 50). There are some circumstances in which the use of first language might hinder ELLs from learning a second language.

Funds of Knowledge

According to the research literature, parental partnership in schools has a huge impact in helping children's education, performance, and achievement at school (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Morris & Taylor, 1998). Home/school involvement involves mutual support between home and school that is initiated and encouraged by both teachers and schools. It promotes the active involvement of family members in the school and embraces participation of the whole family. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined parental involvement as incorporating

> the range of parental activities . . . [that] include home-based activities related to children's learning in school—for example, reviewing the child's work and monitoring child progress, helping with homework, discussing school events or course issues with the child, providing enrichment activities pertinent to school success, and talking by phone with the teacher. They also include school-based involvement, focused on such activities as driving on a field trip, staffing a concession booth at school games, coming to school for scheduled conferences or informal conversations, volunteering at school, serving on a parent-teacher advisory board. (pp. 5–6)

There is a growing awareness of the importance of the home and cultural background to enhance learning. Teachers increasingly need to be more informed and understanding of the families and cultures of their students (Guo, 2012).

Integrating parents' cultural and linguistic practices and ways of knowing into daily classroom activities enhances and supports learning between home and school (Cline & Necochea, 1996; Necochea & Cline, 2000). It begins when the school validates "cultural capital"[3] and "funds of knowledge"[4] (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Funds of knowledge are resources inherent to each household that are necessary for it to function as a unit and these resources can be tapped to integrate them into classroom instruction that is meaningful to the student (Haneda & Wells, 2012). The funds of knowledge differ from household to household, often related to the employment of the members of the household. In locations where many families are employed in the same or similar industries, the funds of knowledge in many households will be quite similar.

In schools, the funds of knowledge can be an asset to support learning in the classroom. Household knowledge can provide a rich source of information that can enhance the educational experience for students (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1992). Funds of knowledge can also be used to educate teachers about the cultural and social history of the students in their classrooms. Marshall and Toohey (2010) conducted a study based on family stories as funds of knowledge which provided valuable information to the teacher and this resulted in construction of bilingual storybooks. This project was

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[3] Cultural capital is a concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) that refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by groups in society or society as a whole.

[4] Funds of knowledge refers to "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N., (1992).

considered to be successful not only through the sharing of stories from home but also by demonstrating that the school valued the richness of the cultural milieu. When teachers educate themselves using funds of knowledge they can tap into them as a resource to facilitate learning, connecting the home and school. "If teachers include parents and families in the formula for educating children and seriously listen to and value their funds of knowledge, we will turn the key that unlocks the door to a bright future for children and their parents" (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. 150). Furthermore teachers can integrate the funds of knowledge to create a context that forms the social and cultural understanding to support their students. "Cultural resources that children bring to the classroom can play a powerful role in influencing classroom teaching and learning once they are identified, interpreted, and drawn on in the instructional program" (Vasquez, 2006, p. 53).

Moll et al. (1992) observed that "classroom [s] seem encapsulated, if not isolated, from the social worlds and resources of the community" (p. 134). One of the best ways to end this isolation and bring the funds of knowledge into the classroom is to encourage parental involvement with the school. This is an activity that works in two directions in that parents are encouraged to bring their funds of knowledge into the classroom through participation in the school and the school provides assistance to the parents to enable this to occur.

There are a number of studies that illustrate the importance of parental involvement in supporting their children's education both in the classroom and at

home and valuing the culture of the student's home in the classroom. This topic

is reviewed by Baker and Soden (1997) and is emphasized by other authors

(Cummins, Chow, & Schecter, 2006; Marshall & Toohey, 2010).

Many schools do encourage parents to become involved, however there

are number of variables that contribute to parents' decisions to become involved.

Some of these are: degree of teacher encouragement, lack of parental skills,

school scheduling conflicts, parental fear of teacher retribution, and parental lack

of English comprehension (Epstein, 1986; Morris & Taylor, 1998). Studies show

that parents will commit to become involved in their children's education if they

believe strongly in it (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987) and generally believe that

involvement in their children's education is a parental responsibility (Hoover-

Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995).

Mapp (1997) pointed out that studies conducted over the previous 30 years

had "identified a relationship between parent involvement and increased student

achievement, enhanced self-esteem, improved behavior, and better attendance" (p.

1). Walberg (1984) stated that in addition to these benefits "efficiency of the

home in fostering learning has declined for several decades, but cooperative

partnerships between the home and the school can dramatically raise educational

productivity" (p. 397). The home/school partnership is even more important now

since schools more commonly depend on parents to assist their children with

school work. According to Potter (1989) "parents were the child's first teacher

and will remain the most important throughout the child's life" (p. 28). In this

vein Piper (1993) pointed out that "parents play an important role not just in helping their children to adjust but in helping teachers to adjust the classroom environment to make it more conducive to their children learning" (pp. 299–300).

Summary

A sociocultural theoretical framework was employed to situate this study. The concepts that arise from sociocultural theory provide an understanding of how teachers can engage in developing their own social and cognitive processes in order to negotiate their learning and development in teaching diverse students. Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses provide an approach to understanding language acquisition which can be drawn upon as a basis for teaching. It has also been influential in providing direction for research in the field. Cummins' (2001a) development framework of language proficiency is also used with specific reference to the two categories, BICS and CALP, as they pertain to the importance of second language acquisition and learning. The concept of the funds of knowledge is useful in contributing to enhancing the interaction between the home and school to support learning. In the next chapter, I review the research literature on personal practical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and Schön's (1983) epistemology of practice in order to understand how teachers construct *knowledge* from their personal and practical experiences in teaching ELLs.

Chapter Three: Review of Related Literature

Teacher Education

Freeman and Johnson (1998) pointed out that in the past, teacher education was rooted in a positivist approach whereby teaching was seen "as a set of discrete behaviours, routines, or scripts drawn from empirical investigations of what effective or expert teachers did in practice" (p. 399). In other words, from this epistemological point of view, teaching is "generated within the process-product paradigm" (p. 399) which means that teacher education is closely linked to teaching behaviours resulting in student learning outcomes (Johnson, 2006). During this time research in the field of teacher cognition was centered on the teacher and the practical experience of what teachers do in their classrooms (Freeman, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). The general assumption about teacher education programs was that there are three levels: the first is theoretical education in university, the second is the practicum experience, and the third is the first years of teaching. These levels ignored the individual experiences of teachers and they defined teachers' knowledge on the basis of the academic process rather than what teachers actually experience. In the 1980s a major change occurred and researchers focused on the practical knowledge, beliefs, and socially constructed experiences of teachers. The emphasis was on how teachers use their knowledge. This was found to be interpretive and continually restructured and influenced by the social environment within the classroom (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Borg (2006) provided an historical overview of research into teacher cognition over the previous 35 years. In the 1970s such research focused primarily on teacher behaviours and student learning outcomes rather than on teacher cognition and the role it plays in teaching. Prior to 1975, most research in the field was oriented towards teacher cognition, linking it to learner outcomes. In 1975, the National Institute of Education in the United States organized a conference on research in teaching. Reports from the conference indicated that a focus on teacher cognition was less important than determining what teachers are thinking. This reflects the developments in cognitive psychology at the time, which showed the influence of thinking on cognition. Subsequently, researchers argued that more emphasis was needed on teacher psychological processes and how teachers are thinking about teaching. Funding was granted for this new approach and sparked the beginning of a new era of research into teacher cognition. Studies at this time were small scale but they revealed that teachers' thinking and cognition were related to their beliefs, and that beliefs often operate unconsciously.

In the 1980s teacher cognition was conceptualized as an important factor in shaping what happens in the classroom, and many more studies were conducted. Such studies revealed the two-way interaction between teacher thinking and classroom practice. Curriculum and teacher practical knowledge were other areas addressed in the field of teacher cognition at this time. A shift in

approach occurred in which teaching was seen in a broader social context, as opposed to the decision-making approach more prevalent in the 1970s.

By the 1990s teacher education saw a time of "change and re-conceptualization" (Freeman, 2002, p. 5). This was the decade in which teachers' learning was redefined to focus on their mental processes and decision making and included their knowledge about content and their students' prior knowledge (Johnson, 2006, 2009). In the next decade, this became generally accepted and its understanding was further developed: "the notion of teachers' mental lives, and indeed the concept of teacher learning itself, was firmly established as a matter of public policy" (Freeman, 2002, p. 8).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s teacher knowledge became of great interest in the study of cognition. Many reviews were published, each looking at various aspects of teacher cognition. Research on teacher knowledge focused on the characteristics of teacher knowledge and complexity of topics, rather than on pedagogy and what teachers need to know.

During the current decade, research into teacher cognition continued with two main views of teacher knowledge being held. These were formal teacher knowledge in which teachers learn and apply knowledge and practical teacher knowledge, which is oriented towards classroom practice (Borg, 2006). "From a sociocultural perspective, teacher cognition originates in and is fundamentally shaped by the specific social activities in which teachers engage" (p. 17). As mentioned above, teacher education over the past decades has gone through

significant changes. Each decade focused slightly differently on how teachers

learn, work in the classroom, and what constituted teaching practice at the time.

In the current research arena on teacher education "learning to teach, from

a sociocultural perspective, [is] based on the assumption that knowing, thinking,

and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and

teaching in specific classroom and school situations" (Johnson, 2009, p. 13). In

other words from a sociocultural perspective learning is based on teacher

knowledge and how teachers use this knowledge with respect to students'

learning within the community of the classroom. According to Johnson (2009) a

sociocultural perspective focuses on three aspects of second language teaching: it

explains cognitive processes of teacher learning, teachers' education is a dynamic

reconstruction of social practices responding to individual and local needs as

change agents in reconstructing and developing new resources as challenges arise,

and it informs the content and the processes of ELL teacher education.

One of the concepts central to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is

internalization, which can also be applied to teachers as well as students whereby

teachers develop their cognition through the use of tools. Tools falls into three

broad categories: artifacts, concepts, and social relations. Tools change the

society and are themselves changed by the society. For example a curriculum

shapes how a teacher teaches and how the students learn. In turn it is shaped by

the teacher as it is modified in order to meet the needs of a specific classroom

(e.g., a classroom with ELLs or special needs students). From this perspective

and through mediation with other teachers and students via a dialogic process with self, teacher cognition is transformed by personal internalization. This affects how teachers shape their thinking with respect to teaching and is reflected in changes over time in classroom instruction. In other words teacher learning and instruction changes as teachers engage in the social process of interacting with other individuals (Johnson, 2009). Similarly, the Vygotskian (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development is also important for teacher cognitive development in terms of their own continuing professional learning. Teacher cognitive development leads to self understanding and then becomes teacher knowledge.

Teachers' Knowledge

The concept of teacher knowledge is complex. There are many different assumptions and overlapping approaches (Wells, 1999), yet there are commonalities (Carter, 1990). A number of researchers have discussed the complexity of teachers' knowledge (Carter, 1990; Johnston, 1992; Wells, 1999). These researchers see teacher knowledge as relating to the activities in the classroom environment and how the teacher responds to the various situations that arise on a daily basis. According to Elbaz (1983) a teacher constructs practical knowledge through observation, experience, and engagement with students.

There are a number of reviews and research approaches to the subject. Investigators in the area of teachers' knowledge include in their discussions such concepts as teacher beliefs, narratives, attitudes, and practical knowledge.

Research in the field of teacher knowledge has moved from the study of teacher behaviour to consider what teachers do in their classrooms. This epistemological shift encompasses the move from seeing teacher knowledge as prescriptive to describing the nature of teacher knowledge (i.e., planning and decision making and teachers' thought processes about their practice) (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Models of teacher knowledge have been studied by other researchers such as Elbaz (1983) and Shulman (1986, 1987) "to describe and delineate the knowledge base for teaching" (Grossman, 1990, p. 4).

Grossman (1990) pointed out that research on teacher education has been prescriptive and focused primarily on behaviours and not on teacher knowledge. Grossman (1990) delineated four areas of teacher knowledge: "general pedagogical knowledge; subject matter knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; and knowledge of context" (p. 5). In addition to these Carter (1990) referred to a category known as teacher practical knowledge. She defined practical knowledge as referring to "knowledge teachers have of classroom situations and the practical dilemmas they face in carrying out purposeful action in these settings" (p. 299). Similarly Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define personal (teachers') practical knowledge as "a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons" (p. 25). In the same way, Johnston (1992) refers to teachers' practical knowledge as "knowledge teachers use in their classroom situations, with an emphasis on the complexities of interactive teaching and thinking-in-

action" (p. 124). There is a lot of overlap in the approaches of various researchers to this concept of teacher knowledge. It is difficult to ascertain and separate any one particular strand from the complexity of ideas that surround teacher knowledge.

Fenstermacher (1994) reviewed this area in detail and provided some insights about the different perspectives on teacher knowledge. He began by identifying and explaining different concepts of teacher knowledge. Fenstermacher (1994) extensively discussed the various ways that researchers have investigated what teachers know and how teachers come to know what they know. Within each of these aspects of knowledge and knowing he further attempted to clarify the confusion surrounding exactly what knowledge is, and he critiqued the various research approaches that have been developed.

According to Fenstermacher (1994) there are two lines of research that attempt to find out what teachers know. The first approach is the examination of practical knowledge based on narrative and story which attempts to avoid imposing external theories on the narrative. This is the approach of Elbaz (1983) and Connelly and Clandinin (1995). The second approach examined by Schön (1983) is the epistemology of practice that separates theoretical knowledge and formal knowledge from practical knowledge. Formal knowledge is the concept of knowledge as it appears in conventional behavioural science research. Practical knowledge includes "practical, personal practical, situated, local, relational, and tacit" knowledge (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 6).

Schön's (1983, 1987) approach is useful in examining teacher practices/pedagogy. Schön (1983), in writing about teacher reflective thinking, drew attention to its importance and built on Dewey's work. Dewey (1933) recognized that thinking and reflection allow anticipation of future events and enable behaviour that is integral for teachers to develop and learn. Thinking enables individuals to direct their activities and to plan in an intentional fashion (Dewey, 1933).

Schön (1983) presented different views on teacher knowledge. One such approach is called Technical Rationality[5] which has been historically the dominant approach and which is based on scientific method and quantitative techniques. The limits of technical rationality were recognized in the post World War II period which led to greater interest in the intuitive applications of knowledge. It was recognized that the rigor of a scientific approach did not explain all that teachers do in their classrooms. Therefore, an alternate approach to that of technical rationality was needed to explain what teachers know. This led Schön (1987) to his concepts of the components of reflective practice as knowing-in-action, reflection-in action, and reflection-on-action.

Schön's (1983) knowing-in-action is implicit in nature and is a feeling for what we are doing. It does not come from any abstract theoretical perspective. The knowing is in the action and if a practitioner is asked how they know they cannot explain. The everyday activities of the professional depend on knowing-

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[5] Technical rationality is "professional activity [that] consists instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (Schön, 1983, p. 21).

in-action. Reflection-in-action is one step beyond. While "doing," the practitioners start asking themselves questions about what they are doing. This occurs particularly when there is some unanticipated event or difficult phenomenon with which the practitioner is confronted. Reflection-in-action often results in a change to knowing-in-action. Reflection-in action refers to the way teachers think on the spot (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). This reflective thinking helps to guide teachers in making informed decisions about their teaching.

Researchers view reflection-in-action as a way to improve pedagogical practice within the context of the classroom. Schön (1987) explained reflection-in-action as the process of implicitly looking at what was done previously and how using the new information "may indirectly shape [improve] our future action" (p. 31). Reflection-on-action goes a second step beyond, and it involves thinking about what has been done and how it can be changed in the future. This is the process which is employed by teachers to improve their classroom practice on an ongoing basis "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (p. 26).

Schön (1987) suggested that reflective practice is an important learning strategy as teachers/professionals become aware of their new knowledge and learn from their experiences. Furthermore Schön stated that teachers' work is challenging and requires reflection in order to bring about change. According to Farrell (2012) reflection and reflective practice have been addressed in many different disciplines "but there still remains a sense of lack of clarity about what it

is and how it can be achieved" (p. 8). Furthermore he states that the purpose of reflective practice is to improve learning opportunities for students.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) outlined three categories of teacher reflection. The first category is the cognitive element of reflection which is based on how teachers make decisions about their teaching and practice within the learning environment of the classroom. They reviewed research that shows teaching performance improves with greater experience. The second category is the critical element of reflection which relates to the "ethical and moral aspects" (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991, p. 39) i.e., how teachers organize for instruction and consider more than simple teaching techniques in their reflection. The third category is based on *teachers* narratives which illustrates their lived experiences in their daily lives. This provides the lens through which teachers construct and reconstruct their thinking about teaching and through this experience create the story. Teacher reflection is increasingly recognized as a focus of study, incorporating a greater awareness of the complexity of teaching.

Schön (1983, 1987) referred to knowing-in-action as intuitive thinking about a particular activity that is transformed through reflection-in-action. Farrrell (2012) regarded reflection-in-action is "a reflective conversation in which the practitioner is listening to the *situation's backtalk"* (p. 13). In the same vein, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) saw the interpretive view as narrative and stated "narratives can be a powerful force in heightening teachers' awareness of their own professional reasoning" (p. 41).

Research on teacher knowledge has been drawing a great deal of interest by addressing the questions of what teachers need to know in the classroom. In the last two decades the research on teaching has changed from a focus on the process-product notion of teaching (Beirjaard & Verloop, 1996) to teachers' thought processes and practical knowledge. There are two broad categories of teachers' knowledge (Carter, 1990; Elbaz, 1981, 1983; Johnston, 1992): teachers' personal practical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

Teachers' personal practical knowledge is sometimes assumed to be the opposite of theoretical knowledge and/or quantitatively derived knowledge. While it appears that there is a division between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge that reflects the differences between the "academic" and classroom teachers (Clarke, 1994), it is important to realize from the outset that this is not the case. Rather, teachers' practical knowledge includes theoretical knowledge which is adapted to a particular teaching situation (Beirjaard & Verloop, 1996).

Teachers' personal practical knowledge is focused on the complexities of everyday classroom practice. Teachers are faced with the everyday dilemmas that require them to act in ways to make appropriate decisions with respect to organizing and instructing students in the context of the classroom (Carter, 1990). Personal practical knowledge includes factual knowledge, knowledge of procedure, and beliefs and values (Beirjaard & Verloop, 1996).

Elbaz (1983) conducted a case study of a high school English teacher by the name of Sarah over a 2-year time period. In an earlier report on this study Elbaz (1981) wanted to ascertain the "understanding of the teachers' knowledge from her own point of view, and thus to exemplify and embody the conception of practical knowledge" (p. 51). According to Elbaz (1983) "this knowledge encompasses first-hand experience of students' learning styles, needs, strengths, and difficulties and a repertoire of instruction techniques and classroom management skills" (p. 5). In other words a teacher's personal practical knowledge is constructed through observation, experience, and engagement with students. Teachers' personal practical knowledge is also studied by researchers such as Connelly and Clandinin (1995) who are particularly concerned with the way teachers' knowledge fits into the professional knowledge landscape.

Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge encompasses and is synthesized from two other forms of knowledge that teachers learn during their formal education. These are the knowledge of the specific subject matter that is to be taught and the general pedagogical knowledge that is obtained from pre-service education. Shulman (1987), in his study of teacher knowledge, emphasized that teacher knowledge is based on what factual information teachers know about a subject and how they portray the content to maximize learning to the full potential of the individual. He pointed out the error of policy makers who misunderstand the nature of teacher knowledge and try to put it in a standardized measurable format

that is used to assess teacher and school performance. Shulman (1987) stated that teacher knowledge is based on observation of what expert teachers do and how they teach in order to learn what constitutes essential knowledge. He suggested a template that outlines the categories needed to understand what teacher knowledge should be. They are: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of educational ends. This template for teaching provides an eclectic approach. Shulman (1987) referred to the category of pedagogical content knowledge as significant in teaching because it encompasses "how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, and presented for instruction" (p. 8).

Shulman (1986), in another article, discussed at length the differences between what was understood as teacher knowledge in the 1800s and what is currently understood. There has been a complete shift from almost complete content and no pedagogical knowledge in the 1800s to almost complete pedagogical knowledge with little content knowledge in the 1990s. He advocated a change in teacher education to focus upon the case study as a method of teaching theory.

Freeman (1996) identified three types of teacher knowledge and summarized the literature on each. These are the behavioural view, the cognitive view, and the interpretivist view. The behavioural view illuminates the teacher as provider of knowledge and person who takes care of students' learning needs.

The problem with the behavioural approach is that it breaks teaching into

repetitive routine tasks which results in a process-product approach to lessons

(Clark & Peterson, 1986). This is a traditional way of looking at teaching which

codifies the complexity of teaching and in which the act of teaching is separate

from the individual teacher (Freeman, 1996). Shulman (1986) discussed the same

idea of a behaviouristic approach and criticized standards based

> on a growing body of research on teaching, research classified under the
>
> rubrics of "teacher effectiveness," "process-product studies," or "teacher
>
> behaviour" research. These studies were designed to identify those
>
> patterns of teacher behaviour that accounted for improved academic
>
> performance among pupils. (p. 6)

The cognitive view involves a different perspective on how teachers

organize content to engage the learner. This encompasses planning, making

decisions, and adapting instruction on an ongoing basis. It looks specifically at

what teachers are thinking about as well as what they are doing. Other authors

express the same ideas. For example Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) referred

to it as the cognitive element of reflection.

The interpretivist view is characterized by teachers' understanding and

what is involved within the context of teaching. In other words "teachers are

constantly involved in interpreting their worlds: they interpret their subject matter,

their classroom context, and the people in it" (Freeman, 1996, p. 98). Teachers'

stories about teaching are complex because they involve a wide range of elements

including linking thought and activity, understanding context in the classroom, and interpreting what to do to shape classroom practice. Therefore it is difficult for teachers to tell their stories or even explain the reason for them. Teacher stories are further complicated because there is no theoretical basis to explain the complexity of what teachers know.

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs

While there have been many studies of students and the strategies of teaching, the role of the attitudes of teachers towards teaching and learning has only been recognized as having significance in education within the past 20 years. Research on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and the effects of these on pedagogical practice are few. This is despite the fact that it is now becoming recognized that a teacher's attitudes are of major importance in pedagogical practice and translate into success or failure of their students. Research in the field of teacher knowledge such as personal practical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is important in understanding how teachers shape their practice with respect to teaching. An important question for research is how these inform teaching ELLs in the mainstream.

The study of the beliefs of teachers and students in SLA is a development that originated in the mid-1980s (Barcelos, 2003; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006). Barcelos (2003) reviewed various studies of beliefs and found that the methods used in such studies fall into three general approaches: normative, meta-cognitive, and contextual. The normative refers to studies of

culture, which are believed to explain students' classroom behavior. The meta-cognitive approach sees students' meta-cognitive knowledge constituting theories that help them reflect on their actions and develop their learning potential. The third approach, contextual, describes beliefs as being embedded in the context in which the student is located.

Borg (2006) noted that a major contribution to the literature on teachers' beliefs is made by Pajares in his detailed and seminal review of the research in the area. Borg states that the work of Pajares "opened up a wide range of specific issues for subsequent research to examine" (p. 25). During the 1990's research on beliefs took on a broad approach and activity developed particularly in the area of cognition in the education of teachers.

In the present decade a new discussion has emerged which touches on the beliefs that teachers hold. It is the discussion around how much theoretical knowledge a teacher requires (formal knowledge) versus the amount of practical experience (practical knowledge) which is needed to actually function in the classroom (Borg, 2006). At the present time, a consensus appears to be forming around the viewpoint that practical ability in the classroom is at least as, if not more, important than theoretical knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 1996).

Fang (1996) reviewed a small number of studies and pointed out that teacher beliefs are difficult to define. One important point that Fang demonstrated is that teachers at all levels hold beliefs about student teaching and

subjects taught. These beliefs influence the reaction of teachers to education and teaching practice. The second important feature of teachers' beliefs that Fang (1996) highlighted is the controversy concerning the connection between teacher beliefs and practices. This is the consistency versus inconsistency issue. The literature appears to be split on this matter. Fang (1996) presented a number of studies that show that teacher beliefs are reflected in their classroom practice and a number of other studies that show that teachers hold a particular set of beliefs but sometimes behave in the classroom in a way that is inconsistent with these beliefs. There are a number of explanations for inconsistency between teacher beliefs and practices. These include the complexities of classroom life, other contextual situations, and classroom factors such as the amount of assistance needed by students of different ability, the way students learn, emotional characteristics of the classroom, etc. In addition, the attitudes and support of administrators and colleagues can play an important role. In a review of areas for potential research Fang pointed out that "Rather than simply providing teachers with more theories, educators must help teachers understand how to cope with the complexities of classroom life and how to apply theory within the constraints imposed by those realities" (p. 59).

Brousseau, Book, and Byers (1988) studied teacher beliefs with respect to the effect of background on the beliefs that teachers hold. They found that years of experience were the only variable that showed an effect on teacher beliefs. There are similar findings by other researchers such as Richards, Tung, and Ng

(1992). Brousseau et al. (1988) confirmed that teacher beliefs are important because they affect the process and culture of teaching. They also noted that if there is a difference between beliefs and behavior, knowing the beliefs is important in order to find out what factors in the educational environment are causing this gap. There are wide ranges of teachers, schools, and educational environments which requires the situation in each locale to be evaluated individually. Knowledge of various differences is important prior to introducing administrative or political changes to an educational district because blanket changes which do not consider such matters may not only fail but be counterproductive.

Two studies examined teachers' beliefs about diversity: those of Cabello and Burstein (1995) and Harrington and Hathaway (1995). The latter was a study that used anonymity and computer conferencing to engage student teachers in discussion of their beliefs about multicultural education. In the former, two case studies were presented from a larger investigation of how teachers can modify their attitudes about teaching in diverse classrooms. In both studies it was found that by drawing out and challenging student teacher beliefs about teaching students, the student teachers were found to think more deeply and inclusively about multicultural education. In both studies this led to changes in approach and improvement of pedagogy. However, it was not clear that basic beliefs underwent any major modifications although they could be seen to change slightly during the

course of the studies. It could be anticipated they would change significantly with time if the students continued their reflective practice.

Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004) surveyed 729 teachers in a suburban district in the U.S. with a large number of immigrant and refugee students. In their study they examined teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices, and needs in relation to ELLs. Although some research focuses on this issue, no previous study had been done to assess teacher attitudes and beliefs that characterize teachers who are more accepting of ELLs in their classrooms and those who are not. The school district where the study was conducted consisted of 15,000 students, and one third of the population was identified as having limited English proficiency. Teachers who were involved in the survey either had more than 20 years' experience or fewer than 5 years'. Some teachers could speak a language other than English and had training in bilingual education. The survey items consisted of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of teachers of regular and bilingual classrooms. Students came from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Many of the students were identified as being preliterate in their home language and for many there was not much history about their schooling prior to arriving in the United States. Low level literacy skills were common. It was reported that 55% of the students' difficulties related to adjusting to a new school environment. The survey demonstrated that the majority of teachers were in favour of professional development for teaching ELLs and an action plan was put in place. Assessment of ELLs was also a concern and this

was addressed through training sessions to enhance teacher skills. The study

concluded

> More than a year later after the district sought our help, and the subsequent
>
> development and administration of the survey tool, positive change has
>
> taken hold . . . the district has restructured its service delivery to ELL
>
> students, refined its assessment and placement procedures, and thrown
>
> open its doors to ELL parents and community. (p. 74)

Since the number of ELLs is increasing in many schools, O'Neal, Ringler,

and Rodriguez (2008) studied teacher preparation and its effects on an elementary

school's climate. They found that teachers were not adequately being prepared to

teach linguistically and culturally diverse students. Their U.S. study assessed

teachers' perception of their preparedness to teach ELLs in mainstream

classrooms. Participants consisted of two male and 22 female teachers from a

rural school with a large population of Spanish-speaking students. Results

indicated that teacher perceptions were that instruction in teaching ELL was not

important in their teacher preparation. Responses to the questions revealed that

teachers were not being adequately taught to teach culturally diverse students.

Based on the results, recommendations were made in areas such as university

course work related to language acquisition theory and ongoing professional

development. Similar conclusions were also made in other studies (Batt, 2008;

Flores & Smith, 2008).

Youngs and Youngs (2001) examined predictors of mainstream teacher attitudes towards teaching ELLs. They found little information in the literature. They proposed a framework for assisting teachers in teaching ELLs. The proposed model consisted of six predictors of teachers' attitudes in teaching ELLs: general education, ELL preparation, personal contact with diverse cultures, contact with ELLs, demographics and personality. They surveyed 143 teachers from two junior high schools and one high school in the U. S. Data were gathered through two questionnaires. One of these related to teachers' attitudes and the other to working with ELLs in the classroom. Results from the study showed that teachers' attitudes were generally neutral to slightly positive towards teaching ELLs. It is important to note that the researchers found two conflicting points. In examining the first question: "If you were told that you could expect two or three ESL students in one of your classes next year, how would you describe your reaction?" (p. 108), 57 % of teachers responded neutrally and 29% were positive. In response to the second question "How would you describe your overall reaction to working with ESL students in your classroom?" (p. 108), 31% were neutral and 64% were positive. This suggested that teachers tended to be "somewhat more positive about ESL students overall than about teaching ESL students in their own classes" (p. 110). The researchers concluded that both pre-service and in-service teachers who have exposure to " foreign language courses, courses in multicultural education, ESL training, and work with culturally diverse

ESL students, the more positive teachers are likely to be about working with ESL students" (p. 117).

There are a number of studies into teachers' attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Two of these are those of Flores and Smith (2008) and Garcia-Navarez, Stafford, and Arias (2005). The former noted that the majority of new teachers in the United States are of White middle class origins yet the population of students is increasingly non-White and non-middle class. They reviewed a number of factors related to teacher attitudes toward the linguistic and cultural strengths of non-English minorities. They distinguished between beliefs, which are based on personal experience, and knowledge, which exists as discernible truth. They conducted a study that showed that exposure to diversity results in a more positive outlook toward language diversity and that all teachers need to have exposure to diversity issues no matter what their ethnicity. They also found that experience by itself does not result in any more positive an outlook towards language minority students than lack of experience. Arising from this research they advocated that teacher candidates engage in diversity issues throughout their education and that teacher candidates have some degree of second language proficiency. They also recommended ongoing professional development in diversity and second language support.

Garcia-Navarez et al. (2005) conducted a similar study of elementary teachers also in the U. S. This study demonstrated that teachers who are certified as bilingual have the most positive attitudes toward the family languages of their

ELLs, thus confirming the recommendation of Flores and Smith (2008) that ELL teachers have some second language proficiency. Interestingly, Garcia-Navarez et al. (2005) found that traditional teachers[6] have more negative attitudes towards the family languages of their students and usually do not want it used for educational purposes.

Yoon (2007) examined three teachers' practices in the U. S. In her review of the literature she pointed out that a number of studies with respect to classroom teachers' roles focused mainly on the linguistic needs of the students and not on their social and cultural needs. She also pointed out that only a small number of studies have looked at teaching practices related to ELLs. In her study over a period of 3 months she found that the teachers did not explicitly understand whose role it was to teach ELLs (i.e., the classroom teacher or the specialized ESL teacher). Most ELLs spend their time in mainstream classrooms. The findings from Yoon's study indicated that teachers of mainstream classrooms do not provide instruction to meet the needs of the ELLs. Instead, the mainstream teachers feel that this is the responsibility of specialized ESL teachers.

In her analysis of the three teachers she studied, Yoon (2007) found that the attitudes of each of the teachers towards ELLs were different. Two of the teachers did not pay close attention to the culture of the students whereas one of the teachers acknowledged ELLs in her class as part of the whole group. Students were more comfortable in the latter class and they participated more freely in the

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[6] The authors of this study defined traditional teachers as those teachers who taught in English only classrooms.

classroom. The social and cultural needs of the students were considered and this allowed for developing relationships with all students.

There is a particular view that teachers can hold that has a negative effect on teaching ELLs which is known as the deficit view and falls within the cultural/difference deficit model (Guo, 2012). The deficit view is a perception that is often held by teachers, often subconsciously, in which they regard students that are disadvantaged in comparison to the dominant group by cultural background, language, and economics as being unable to succeed academically and are therefore less worthy of the teacher's attention. Such students are usually on track for academic failure not due to any particular personal failing but because those who teach them simply assume that they cannot achieve. They then fail to teach them. This deficit view, when applied to identifiable cultural or linguistic minority groups, is referred to as the cultural deficit model. If research is grounded in a deficit model it overlooks systemic causes of academic failure by blaming or identifying the issue in individual students or the communities from which they come.

Cultural deficits create an assumption that students of deficit backgrounds do not value education or have the same degree of cultural capital and their parents are not as involved in their children's education to the same degree as White middle-class counterparts. The cultural deficit model fails to acknowledge the cultural, social, and political factors that cause the poor performance of

linguistic minority students. It can do great damage by actually drawing attention away from these factors.

As teachers face demographic shifts in their classrooms they have to come to grips with the reality that the classroom dynamics are going to shift away from predominantly White middle-class monolingual students to students from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2011) intensively examined diversity in teacher education and asserted that multicultural education is needed as a major part of teacher education programs. She argued that if teacher education is going to change, the concept of cultural diversity must be embraced by teacher educators and be an integral part of teacher education programs. Another point she argued is that there needs to be more focus on what teachers do rather than what teachers teach (i.e., more emphasis on classroom pedagogy). She also discussed the need to recruit more mature teachers of different cultural backgrounds who have more life experiences, interests, and strengths to bring to the issues of poverty, race, and culture that underlie the difficulties experienced by many minority students. Ladson-Billings argued that it is necessary to look at pre-service teacher preparation programs in order to effectively prepare White middle class students for teaching to a diverse population of students.

Another interesting point that Ladson-Billings (2011) put forth is how multicultural course work is structured to prepare teachers for their role of becoming teachers. She pointed out that multicultural course work should not be

seen as a one-shot deal. Ladson Billings (2011) found that when multicultural

course work is presented in such a way it does not provide a deep understanding

of what the issues are when it comes to teaching diverse populations of students,

(i.e., race, gender, and ethnicity). Instead multiculturalism should be part of the

package in all aspects of teacher education. By presenting it this way, pre-service

teachers would recognize that it is a serious matter and that it is imperative that

teachers understand the issues associated with diversity. Ambe's (2006) article

also pointed this out in an article on multicultural education.

Ladson-Billings (2011) maintained that pre-service teachers should be

placed in schools with classes comprised of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic

difference in order to foster a deeper understanding of diversity. However, while

this would be ideal for new teachers, there is a problem in that cooperating

teachers are often themselves not well versed in understanding diversity. This can

be a detriment to novice teachers.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The seminal work of Ladson-Billings (1992) is well recognized in the

field of research on teacher education regarding culturally diverse students.

Ladson-Billings conducted studies with groups of teachers in which she engaged

in observing teachers' pedagogy and classroom activities and guided them in peer

group discussions. The teachers came together to discuss the struggles they faced

and solutions to their difficulties teaching African American students. They came

to an awareness that they were not actually teaching their minority students, and

began to seek and utilize approaches that brought the culture of disadvantaged

students into their classrooms and pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1992) used the

term *culturally relevant teaching* to describe such pedagogy and defined it as

> the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to *fit* the school culture of
>
> the students' culture but also to *use* student culture as the basis for helping
>
> students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions,
>
> and conceptualize knowledge. (p. 314)

In other words, teachers value and recognize the contributions that students bring

to the classroom and use them in supporting a dynamic approach to teaching.

Ladson-Billings (1995) maintained that culturally relevant pedagogy is based on

three criteria: "(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must

develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a

critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current

social order" (p. 160). According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant

teaching does not imply that it is sufficient for students to gain academic

excellence but that they must "develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that

allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, morals, and institutions that

produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). In other words it is important

that students are prepared to think critically and to analyze the society in which

they live so that they can become not only productive citizens, but politically

active in changing the power structure.

The concept of culturally relevant teaching has the advantage of problematizing teaching (Zeichner, 1992) so that teachers are forced to engage in conversations about what constitute the social, historical, and political issues in teaching culturally diverse students. They also must question how pedagogy can be advanced in ways that promote academic success for disadvantaged students. Ladson-Billings (2001a) suggests that the first step in developing culturally relevant pedagogy is creating a professional community in which teachers "see how listening to one another's struggles and solutions can serve as a catalyst for changing ways of thinking about students who have experienced school failure" (p. 677). This means that teachers must become reflective in examining their own pedagogical practice and make improvements so they can better serve all students in their classrooms, regardless of their cultural orientation. The impetus is for teachers to focus on student learning. The teacher group in Ladson-Billings' (2001b) studies became communities in which problems could be discussed and solved with the help of others facing similar situations. While culturally relevant pedagogy was first developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings in relation to African American students (1992), it is by no means only relevant to this specific minority. The principles apply to any students of cultural or linguistic background that are outside the mainstream of the society in which they live.

Home and School Relationships

In the research literature it is well documented that the link between parents' involvement with school and the success of their children is vitally

important (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Walberg, 1984). The customary

practice in Canada is for schools to encourage the involvement of parents in their

children's education. Many parents take this opportunity to build trust and

partnership between the home and school. However, parents from minority

backgrounds whose schooling was different from that in Canada may find this

intimidating and may not be comfortable in developing a partnership with

schools. A number of obstacles are outlined in the literature with respect to

parents being involved in their children's schooling (Arias & Morillo-Campbell,

2008). These authors also suggest ways to encourage parental involvement in

schools. They proposed two models: a traditional and non-traditional model. The

traditional model involves developing parenting skills, two-way communication

about student progress and programs, recruiting families as volunteers, involving

families in learning activities at home, including families in school decisions, and

collaborating with community school-based agencies to strengthen the school

programs. The non-traditional model includes parental empowerment,

community integration into curriculum, and cultural and linguistically appropriate

school and teaching practices.

Parents of ELLs are usually interested in their children's education

because they view education as the route to achieving success in their host

country and society at large. Parents participating in their children's education

play an important role because they are able to communicate with the teachers in

promoting a solid partnership between the home and school. However,

communication with parents of ELLs is a recognized difficulty encountered by teachers (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Lack of parental involvement can be a detriment to children's schooling and is usually caused by language, cultural barriers, and lack of education (Panferov, 2010). Many parents work or take care of young children and that may also prevent them from participating in school activities. Another problem is that in some cultures the male figure in the family often does not allow the female to volunteer in the classroom. Sometimes parents are intimidated by teachers while in other cases parents see the teacher as being the sole individual involved in educating their children, their attitude being that the teachers are the experts and should be left alone to teach their children (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Kanu, 2008; Manning & Baruth, 2009; Mapp, 1997; Piper, 1993). In order to engage parents of ELLs in the school context "both traditional and non-traditional approaches to parental involvement need to be implemented in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways" (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008, p. 8).

Factors affecting parent involvement in the school are:

- o Feeling uneasy in the school environment
- o Feelings of failure when they themselves were at school
- o Feeling threatened by the teacher and being unsure of the new approaches used in school

- o Not seeing themselves as educators and being unaware of the important role they play in contributing to their children's education

- o Believing that their children's education is to be handled by the school without their help and support

- o Feeling they have nothing to contribute to classroom activities

- o Feeling unable to cope with the challenges of school. (Potter, 1989)

Refugee students are a group that may appear to have particular difficulty with the home/school connection. Yau (1995) posited the view that refugee parents are not usually involved with the school and they are generally difficult to reach. She provided four reasons for this: language difficulties, cultural perception of the school, preoccupation with adaptation, and reluctance to become involved with public authorities. She demonstrated that this should not be interpreted as a lack of concern for their children's education and pointed out that they are all looking for a good education and a better future for their children. Similarly, Anderson and Gunderson (1997) found that cultural beliefs and expectations that parents from other countries have about schooling may be in conflict with North American school approaches.

Home/school partnership activities can be very useful in some contexts. A study by Lynn (1997) identified a need for professional development aimed at fostering the home/school connection. "Teachers need professional development

experiences that prepare them for the task just as they need preparation in subject matter and skills" (p. 7). Parents and teachers working cooperatively together and building a relationship between the home and school can only benefit the educational success of the children. Therefore, any educational programming for pre-service and in-service teachers that can help them work on the home/school relationships might be expected to pay off disproportionately well in terms of student advancement. It is important to note that teachers cannot bear the entire responsibility for fostering the involvement of parents in their children's education. The school at large also needs to work collectively with teachers in order to promote this endeavour, and administrative support from the school board level is important as well.

While it is difficult to find resource people who can inform teachers of the cultural and educational background of various cultural groups, it is necessary if parental involvement in their children's education at school is to be supported. This is an area in which the non-traditional approach of integrating the cultural and linguistic practices of the students' family and tapping into the funds of knowledge of those families plays an important role and can be promoted and encouraged by such resource people.

Summary

Teacher knowledge and beliefs are important because they provide the foundation for practical classroom pedagogy. It is clear that teacher knowledge is not only obtained in formal teacher education programs but is developed with

experience and to some extent depends on the reflective ability of each individual teacher. In the study I conducted, teacher knowledge might be expected to vary depending on the teaching experience of the individual participants. The knowledge that teachers bring to their practice and their experiences in education influence the way they develop their practice over time. Both these factors are of importance in exploring individual classroom practice. Culturally relevant pedagogy embraces the idea that a student's culture is acknowledged and valued within a dominant culture. It helps to empower students by including them as part of a community of learners. I also draw on the literature related to the concept of funds of knowledge to understand how the cultural milieu of the home contributes to enriching the learning experiences of diverse students. In Chapter four I outline the research methodology used to conduct the study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The purpose of my study was to explore the pedagogy of three teachers who teach ELLs in mainstream classrooms. My intent was to understand how teachers develop a pedagogical approach to teaching ELLs and how their instructional strategies align with current knowledge about how to support students who are learning English as a second language. The study also sought to identify the ways in which teachers can be supported in the development of their pedagogy and practice[7] in relation to teaching ELLs in mainstream classrooms. This chapter describes the methodology employed in the study. A variety of research approaches were available to assist me in understanding the teachers' pedagogy. An interpretive inquiry case study approach was employed to obtain the information required to answer the research questions and extend my understanding of how teachers support ELLs in their classrooms.

Qualitative research does not belong to any particular discipline. It is an interpretive and dynamic form of inquiry that cuts across subjects and disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The goal of qualitative research is to construct meaning from a phenomenon or event and to interpret the construction created. It includes a number of traditions and requires the researcher to use a range of methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it occurs in a natural setting in

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[7] Practice is the application of theory in everyday activity (Schwandt, 2007).

order to provide observation in the context and setting in which it occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Peshkin (1993) suggested four categories of outcomes of qualitative research: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation. He especially focused on two of the categories, description and interpretation. Through description of particular situations (i.e., a group, individual, or person), the researcher is able to develop understandings and insights. Peshkin argued that good description is foundational to research. The researcher then builds upon the descriptive base by providing interpretation whereby existing concepts and understandings are advanced. Peshkin (1993) stated that interpretation can lead to "changing behaviours, refining knowledge, or both" (p. 26). Recognizing the need for solid description I attended closely to descriptive detail in preparing my case studies for analysis. Peshkin also wrote that interpretation is useful to advance the understanding and development of theories. It provides a particular type of insight known as "problem finding" (p. 26). In problem finding the investigator is able to develop insights that can result in useful outcomes that can, in turn, lead to additional research questions. In my study I found problems that could be investigated further, including the special consideration of refugee children.

Interpretive Inquiry

Interpretive inquiry involves hermeneutics, a term which "refers generally to the art, theory, and philosophy of interpreting the meaning of an object (text, a

work of art, social action, the utterances of another speaker, etc.)" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 136). The three key ideas central to interpretive inquiry provided guidance in conducting my research. The first of these ideas is that interpretation is seen as a creative activity in which the researcher tries to determine the meaning behind another's expression. Second is the idea of the whole-part relationship, the micro/macro, which involves a pattern of moving back and forth between the part and the whole and vice versa. This back and forth movement is referred to as the hermeneutic circle. The third idea is that in hermeneutics the language used by researcher and participants both enables and limits interpretation and so it is important for the researcher to pay attention to language use (Ellis, 2006). In hermeneutics knowledge is deemed to be created, which is in opposition to the positivist idea of a truth existing separately from the observer: "we create rather than find meaning or knowledge" (Ellis, 1998, p. 8). This shift in thinking from a positivist tradition characterizes the whole notion of changing the focus of research from explaining to understanding a phenomenon. Ellis (1998) pointed out that through dialogue we are able to become fully aware of shared knowledge and of our own horizon. She defined horizon as "one's own prejudices" (1998, p. 8), which change as we engage in dialogue with others. In other words, through the use of language, our understanding and interpretation is continually changing. Therefore we are able to transcend language in order to conceptualize and advance our understanding of a particular problem.

Ellis (1998) stated that in using interpretive inquiry as a formal research process, the researcher makes use of a spiral. Each activity in the study is regarded as a loop in the spiral. Each loop has data collection and analysis in the forward arc, and reflection and re-assessment in the backward arc. Following the reflective backward loop, the activity in the next forward loop may be modified based upon the reflection. Using the spiral with each teacher observation and interview in my study helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the teachers' pedagogy. For example, in the forward arc of the spiral in my study I was looking for the pedagogical approaches teachers used, while in the backward arc I was looking at how these approaches were reflected in their teaching practices. "To understand a part, one must understand the whole, and to understand the whole, one must understand the individual parts . . . a movement [that] has no natural starting or end point (Ellis, 1998, p. 16). I tried to create meaning of the teachers' pedagogy and of the classroom context of that pedagogy. I wanted to understand the pedagogy on its own terms; to gain insights into the whole and the individual parts and their interconnections as I engaged deeper in the interpretation. "The aim of interpretive inquiry is not to write the end of an existing story but to write a more hopeful beginning for new stories (Ellis, 1998, p. 10).

In any inquiry there may be unexpected findings. These unexpected findings are referred to in interpretive inquiry as *uncoverings*. Uncoverings make the researcher look at the question with a different viewpoint and allow for

adjustments to the next steps in the inquiry (i.e., to adjust the next loop of the

spiral by re-examining the question or problem differently).

Case Study

Merriam (1998) and Stake (2000) described a case study as a highly

descriptive analysis of a bounded system around which the researcher sets limits.

Thus there is a single entity that is studied within its context, a unit around which

there are boundaries. Merriam concluded that the most defining characteristic of

case study research lies in

> delimiting the object of study, the case . . . the case then, could be a person
>
> such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a
>
> class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on. (p. 27)

Merriam observed that in case studies in qualitative research "researchers are

interested in insights, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing"

(pp. 28–29). Stake (1995) stated that the case is "not to represent the world, but

to represent the case" (p. 104). Yin (1994) noted that a case study has a distinct

advantage for "how" and "why" questions. He observed in a discussion of the

case study as a form of information gathering that the case study is much more

demanding than other forms of information gathering in research. He also

pointed out that education and preparation for a case study and the development

of the study protocol were critical first steps. These need to be properly

completed before data collection begins. If these steps are skipped or

superficially completed then the whole study can be compromised. Yin noted that

case studies can be challenging because of the need for the researcher to be judicious in selecting appropriate methods from a wide variety of instruments.

Case studies have a number of features, described by Merriam (1998) as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. The particularistic feature of a case study is the focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. Merriam stated that sampling must be purposive. In my study I focused particularly on three teachers who were teaching classes with 50% or more of ELLs. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). A second feature of case study research is descriptive; a "rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). I attempted to provide a detailed description of the classroom and the teachers' pedagogy and this description led me to uncover some of the challenges faced by the teachers. The third feature of the case study is heuristic, allowing the researcher to discover findings for themselves thus helping the reader understand the phenomenon under study.

Case studies can lead to an understanding of relationships that were previously unknown. The intent of my study was to enhance understanding of the complexity of teaching in classrooms in which there are a large number of ELLs. Munby (1984) noted that, "the power of this orientation to research [in depth, small sample studies] derives directly from its ability to provide us with

knowledge that can help us understand the particularities of unique professional practice" (p. 38).

Merriam (1998) described three different types of case studies. The descriptive case study in education is "a detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Descriptive case studies are particularly useful in providing information to explore areas in education such as programs and practices. Interpretative case studies use descriptive data "to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Interpretative case studies help to explain a phenomenon that is not sufficiently supported by theory and help to develop a deeper level of conceptualization. Interpretive case studies are considered analytical because of their "complexity, depth and theoretical orientation" (Shaw, 1978, p. 2). A third type of case study, evaluative, assesses information to produce a conclusion. This provides a means of advancing the understanding of a problem by providing a stepping stone to further progress in addressing the questions of concern.

Qualitative case study research is a form of inquiry that helps explain social phenomena with as little disruption of the phenomena as possible. It has also been advocated as one of the ways that best places the findings of research into the hands of teachers (Ellis, 2010). In qualitative case study research a variety of methods are used. None of these are more important than any other and qualitative research has no particular theory that is its own (Denzin & Lincoln,

1994). Merriam (1998) suggested, "case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any or all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing, can be used" (p. 28).

Value of Case Study research.

Case study knowledge is considered durable because it is directly related to one's own sensory experience. Knowledge from case studies is distinguishable from the knowledge gained from other types of research because it is not abstract but more practical in nature. In my study, my prior experience as a teacher and as a researcher was important in understanding and interpreting the phenomena under study. Building upon existing studies in this area, the value obtained was in developing a direct understanding of the teachers' pedagogy. This helped to advance my understanding of teachers' professional development needs and how professional development is structured for in-service teachers. The findings were valuable in that they can be used for planning for the education of in-service and pre-service teachers in the future.

Strengths of Case Study research.

Case study research has many strengths. It provides the researcher with a rich and detailed description of the phenomenon under study and it is the best means of approaching a complex situation that has many variables of differing importance. The insights obtained from case study research can help to expand the reader's experience and "can be constructed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research" (Merriam, 1998, pp. 39–41). Case study research helps

to develop a better understanding of situations that are undergoing change and allow for the setting of boundaries in complex situations.

Limitations of Case Study research.

Case studies can be time consuming. The researcher has to be aware of the risks of either oversimplifying or exaggerating a situation by using a case study approach. There is a particular need for researchers to be aware of and avoid being unduly selective in choosing the case studies for investigation. Awareness of other sources of bias is also required. Additional potential weaknesses of case study research are related to issues of how representational (lack of generalizability) they can be and the danger of a lack of rigor in collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 1998).

Within the qualitative research approach, I conducted an interpretive inquiry based on three case studies. Interpretive inquiry aims to characterize how people experience the world, the ways in which they interact, and the settings in which these interactions take place. Three interpretive case studies were employed to examine my research questions because the case study format allowed for the creation of relationships with the participating teachers and the flexibility during interviews to invite anecdotes, pursue different questions as they arose, and follow up unexpected findings in such a manner that an overall narrative of the case could be developed. "A particular strength of the questions is their open-endedness. They avoid eliciting specific factual information" (Ellis, 1998, p. 37). "Interpretivism . . . considers understanding to be an intellectual

process whereby a knower (the inquirer as subject) gains knowledge about an object (the meaning of human action)" (Schwandt, 2000, pp. 193–194). "The essence of the term interpretation denotes an emphasis on the importance of interpretations of human meaning. It connotes an opposition to the kind of reductionism whereby all discussion of meaning is avoided as much as possible (Bakker, 2010).

The Researcher as Bricoleur

The qualitative researcher has been described as a bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A bricoleur is one who is "adept" at performing a large number of diverse tasks (Schwandt, 2007, p. 25). The bricoleur is an artist who assembles diverse parts and items to form a new creation, known as a bricolage. An example of a bricolage would be the creation of a quilt or the assembling of a film. Researchers can be seen as bricoleurs in that they employ a variety of different methods that are at hand in order to conduct their research. Thus their work is similar to a bricolage. The researcher as bricoleur is able to bring various methods or ideas to bear on the inquiry. Rather than being static, the construction changes during the study as the researcher employs different strategies. The methods used by the researcher include but are not limited to: interviews, observations, interpretations, conversations, artifacts, narratives, and personal accounts. The researcher as bricoleur is knowledgeable about other paradigms and understands that paradigms cannot be combined. The bricoleur understands that research is interactive in nature and is influenced by the researcher's own

social, cultural, gendered, and economic position, and critiques the claim of

value-free science (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative researcher does not

claim to be separate and objective as in a positivist study but rather is aware that

personal history and attitudes influence the interpretation of the phenomena being

studied.

As a bricoleur I positioned myself as a non-participant observer of

teachers who were trying to construct their own experiences and develop their

pedagogy as they worked with the challenges of teaching ELLs from a variety of

different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. In this vein, similar to a

bricoleur, I used the necessary research tools in a flexible manner to form and

reform on an ongoing basis the information gathered from the participants in

order to understand, clarify, and interpret the parts of each defined case as they

connected to the whole. In this way I developed meaning that will contribute to

improving teachers' (and students') experiences. In addition, through rich, thick,

written description I provided useful information from which other researchers

may gain insights and knowledge that will contribute to their work in moving the

field of English language learning forward.

Role of the Qualitative Researcher

The researcher is the key figure for data collection and analysis in

qualitative research. Yin (1994) maintained that case studies must be conducted

by the researcher—case study is not a type of information gathering and analysis

that can be set up and then left to a technician or research assistant. Case study

data analysis requires the researcher to engage in inductive thinking and ongoing interpretation of the data collected. A rigid interview structure is not set in advance but depends on the questions asked and the responses that come from the participants. Yin (1994) listed the skills required by the researcher: a researcher must be able to ask good questions, be a good listener, be adaptive and flexible, understand the issues, and be aware of bias.

Teacher Selection Process

The participating teachers were selected from a large urban school district in Western Canada. The three schools in which they worked had a high number of English language learners. The first teacher, Sarah, was approached through one of my co-workers who was working with me at our field team office. My co-worker had worked at Sarah's school. In conversation with her I mentioned that I was looking for a teacher to participate in my research and she gave me Sarah's name. I approached Sarah's principal and shared with him that I was planning to conduct a research project and I needed to be in a classroom with high numbers of English language learners. He agreed to allow me to work with her. I then contacted her and she agreed to participate in the research project.

Lynette was the second teacher in the research project. She was introduced to me by another teacher who knew that she had a high number of English language learners in her class. I approached Lynette's principal and indicated to him that I was interested in working with Lynette to conduct my

research project. He was very accommodating in allowing me to work at his school. I then approached Lynette and she agreed to take part in the study.

The third teacher, April, was selected through a former principal I had worked with in the inner city. He had moved from the inner city and was principal of a Chinese bilingual school that also had a high number of English language learners in the regular program. He gave me the name of one of his teachers and I contacted her. She agreed to work with me.

Following initial discussions with the principals at the three schools, I informed the school district's research liason officer about the three teachers who had agreed to participate in my research study. The response from the school district was prompt and the necessary approval documentation was sent to the principals of the three schools. The school district was accommodating in granting me permission to do the research. I provided each teacher in the research project with a formal letter and consent form regarding their participation and I asked them to contact me if they had any questions about my proposed work. The three teachers all signed the consent forms.

Data Collection

Data for the case studies were collected by means of semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions, classroom observations, field notes, and a reflective journal. Classroom observations were conducted once per week and each observation lasted for approximately 1 hour. Meetings with the teachers and classroom observations, in addition to interviews, were held each week. I made

field notes based on my classroom observations and I met with each teacher individually to review my observation notes and to verify that what I had recorded was accurate. I also kept a reflective journal to record my thoughts on an ongoing basis throughout the research process. Photographs were digitally recorded in the classrooms without the presence of students as a visual reminder of the physical classroom environment.

Considerable effort was taken in advance to accommodate teachers and their teaching schedules. This required flexibility on my part. I needed to be aware that as a researcher I was entering a complex situation. It was important for me to be able to select what to focus on and at the same time gain some understanding of the environment in which the study took place. I found that Boostrom's (1994) description of the stages of research was very useful. Boostrom suggested that, "with a clearly stated question in mind, a researcher can confidently go into the field, presumably knowing exactly what to look for" (p. 51). He suggested that there are many stages a researcher experiences as a study progresses. These include being similar to a video-camera, an evaluator, a subjective inquirer, an insider, and a reflective interpreter. I initially took on the role of observer as playgoer, which characterized the whole notion of becoming emotionally involved with the story and being drawn into the lives of the participants. I began to develop an understanding of what it was like for these teachers to experience the phenomenon of teaching ELLs. In working with the participants I did not pass judgment on what was being said by them but instead I

aimed to be patient and trusted the process as it unfolded. This stage required me to be more focused and to examine in depth the data that was being gathered. The subjective inquirer was the next stage in which I required a deeper understanding and interpretation of the data. At this point I began to pose additional questions in my research based on the responses from the original interview questions. As I moved into the insider stage I began to get a deeper understanding of the teachers' pedagogy with respect to teaching ELLs. It was important to take time to feel the patterns that were emerging. "The way we accomplish . . . this moving inside, is by learning what things to pay attention to" (Boostrom, 1994, p. 61). As the ideas started to emerge with the teachers, I began to find meaning and understanding as knowledge was created. In Boostrom's last stage I became a reflective interpreter, affected and transformed by the responses of the teachers.

Classroom observations.

The purpose of the classroom observations was to understand classroom practice with respect to teachers teaching ELLs. Specifically, it was to ascertain consistency across the teachers' interview statements and their actual classroom practice and to observe whether the beliefs that the teachers held about teaching ELLs influenced their pedagogical approaches.

Each week I planned with the teachers the day and time that was convenient for them to have me in the classroom to make observations. I wanted the teachers to know that I was flexible and accommodating because I knew that the rhythm of the school could change due to last-minute requirements. I also

wanted them to know that I was easily accessible through e-mail if their plans had

changed. While making my observations I made field notes and recorded

instances where the teachers were demonstrating teaching strategies and at the

same time how they interacted with their students. In addition, questions that

came to me during the observation were recorded for follow-up during the

interview sessions.

> Merriam (1998) pointed out that
>
> observation is a major means of collecting data in qualitative research. It
>
> offers a firsthand account of the situation under study . . . combined with
>
> interviewing . . . allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon
>
> being investigated. (p. 111)

In other words observation and interviewing together provided me with a more

rounded view of each classroom situation because the interview was used to

check the observation in the classroom and vice versa. Interviews allowed me to

access the teachers' thoughts and expressions of their pedagogical beliefs while

observation allowed me to see whether these were explicitly employed in the

classroom.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews (Ellis, 2006) with each teacher and

I audio-recorded the responses digitally. Semi-structured interviews were

employed in my research in order to have the participants reconstruct their own

experiences and not to gather answers to specific questions. Semi-structured

interviews were less formal than structured interviews. I used open-ended

questions in order to encourage each participant to expand upon their responses

and provide their own personal account on the topic of study (Hutchinson &

Wilson, 1994). Attention to accurate observations was very important because

"what is written down . . . becomes the raw data from which a study's findings

eventually emerge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 104). These meetings took place each

week after the observations in the classroom for 45 to 60 minutes over a period of

3 months, for a total of 18 interviews. Each meeting consisted of a semi-

structured interview followed by discussion of the previous classroom

observations and questions arising from previous interview responses that were

applicable. Subsequent questions were developed from the weekly semi-

structured interviews as the research progressed. I also kept a reflective journal to

record my thoughts on an ongoing basis throughout the research process.

The purpose of the interviews was to discuss a set of pre-determined

questions as well as questions that arose from the discussion itself and from the

classroom observations. Interviews were held at times that were convenient for

each participant. By engaging in the interviews I wanted to gain a broader and

deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Initially I began with

introductory questions, which allowed me to get to know the participants, build

relationships, and develop rapport. The use of open-ended questions helped each

participant be at ease in sharing their experiences and to respond openly without

any constraints (Creswell, 2008). This gave me initial accessibility (fore-

structure), which opened the field for investigation. Fore-structure also began the loop for interpretation and analysis (Ellis, 1998).

Seidman (1991) suggested a variety of techniques for interviewing. A particular emphasis was placed on listening skills. Appropriate listening allowed me to follow up on what each participant said and to formulate good questions when the answers were unclear. A good interview is an exploration, and conducted properly uses open-ended questions, not leading questions. Seidman (2006) pointed out that the purpose of in-depth interviews was to "understand the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). The participant was to tell a story and to talk to the researcher as a listener. As the interviewer, I was conscious that I needed to use an interview guide cautiously. As the researcher, during the interview I therefore needed to avoid manipulating the interviewee to get the answers I was looking for. The intention was to have each participant provide an authentic introspective response.

In order to reflect on and learn from our experiences we must share them with others (Ellis, 1998). Through narrative we can tell stories as a way of representing our experiences. Narrative helps us to understand aspects of people's lives with respect to how they experience the world.

In narrative analysis "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories (for example, a history, case study, or biographic episode)" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Polkinghorne (1995) presented some key ideas in using narrative as

a way of understanding data gathered for analysis by researchers. These key ideas are: organizing and synthesizing of data that is coherent, relating events and actions to one another and configuring them to advancement of a plot, the unfolding of human experiences linking past events to the final outcome, synthesizing and configuring events into an explanation (for example in my study how teachers' pedagogy informs their practice teaching ELLs), and analyzing the development of the story from data gathered which involves recursive movement to an emerging thematic plot developed through an hermeneutic circle.

In my study I conducted six interviews with each of the three teachers in order to understand their pedagogy. As I listened to the teachers I tried to make sense of their stories in order to gain insights into their pedagogy and experiences. Data collected from each teacher provided the elements of the story which helped me understand the lived experience of the teachers. The teachers' experiences were then synthesized into a case study which was subjected to further analysis and comparison with the other case studies. According to Polkinghorne (1995), the final account of the story consistent with the data allowed meaning to emerge that was not apparent in the data alone.

Hutchinson and Wilson (1994) described the interview process that allows the researcher to engage in the hermeneutic approach which focuses on the ontological (i.e., modes of being), which in this situation meant searching for the experience of others. "The hermeneutic researcher may ask only one general

question at the beginning of the interview" (Hutchinson &Wilson, 1994, p. 303).
Subsequent questions that arose could be asked for further clarification.

Weber (1986) provided insights and approaches to interviewing as an
"invitation to conversation" (p. 65) and emphasized that trust and commitment is
fundamental for the relationship between the researcher and participant in order to
obtain the desired information. Interviewing is a difficult technique that requires
practice and forethought. Risk is involved in any interview but this risk allows a
positive aspect, the opportunity to learn. Weber noted that perceptions and pre-
conceptions of the interview can influence the interviewer/interviewee
relationship. The interviewer must be aware of this and clearly establish an
understanding of the process to avoid misconceptions. Ethical considerations
were also addressed in conducting the interviews, in particular the risk of betrayal.

Carson (1986) distinguished the differences between an interview and a
conversation as a way of gathering information during the research process. A
conversation helps bridge the gap and allows each participant to be more directly
connected to the generation of information. The relationship between participant
and researcher is more equitable in a conversation than in any other form of
information gathering. Carson provided some helpful insights indicating that
conversation has been particularly attractive as a tool in research, both because of
its richness and because "it is a friendly and natural form of intercourse which
allows for an easy exchange of experiences" (p. 81). Although interviewing is the
tool used for obtaining data, I approached the interview as a conversation because

this allows a more comfortable exchange of information between the interviewer and interviewee.

Transcription of interviews.

After each interview, recordings were copied onto a CD. Transcriptions were made from the original recording immediately following each interview and were stored as Word™ documents. They were reviewed several times to ensure that each transcription was accurate. Brief excerpts of the interviews were used to illustrate points in presentation of data and data analysis. Such excerpts were referenced by teacher number (i.e., T1, T2, or T3) followed by the numerical sequence of the interview quoted (i.e., INT 1, INT 2, INT 3) and the date of the interview, for example the initial interview with Sarah was referred to by T1S INT 1, April 2011. Field notes were coded in the same way: T1S FN 1, April 2011.

Field notes.

During my observations I made field notes about what was happening in the classroom. This included notes on teaching strategies, how the teacher interacted with students, how instructions were presented, and how students interacted with each other. Field notes served to remind me of the classroom context, particularly when I was reviewing my post-observation interview transcripts.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

    Case analysis.

A variety of strategies can be used to evaluate the quality of verbal

accounts in a case study. Validity is an assessment of whether an account is clear

or can be further clarified or made more comprehensible. A true account helped

me and the participants in the study to co-create meaning. In evaluation of an

interpretive account it is more important to ask whether the concern has been

advanced than whether validated knowledge has been produced (Ellis, 1998).

Packer and Addison (1989) presented four approaches to evaluating

interpretive accounts: coherence, relation to external evidence, consensus, and

relationship to future events. Coherence is the requirement for an account to have

an internal character of plausibility. External evidence is evidence from outside

the account that confirms its authenticity. Consensus refers to the fact that

researchers interpreting a study should come to an agreeable understanding with

the participants of the study about the accuracy of their interpretation. Evaluating

the relationship to future events is more difficult, and may not be applicable to

many interpretive accounts. However, some accounts may lead to social

transformation of different degrees, and as such, give a positive evaluation of the

interpretation account. Packer and Addison (1989) concluded that these methods

of evaluation do not provide complete validation, but they do direct attention to

considerations that are valued when assessing an interpretive account. However,

one or all of the approaches might fail to support an interpretation, such as when a

solution is brought that might at first seem implausible. These approaches are

reasonable because they direct attention to considerations about whether the

inquiry answers the questions that directed it (Ellis, 1998).

Polkinghorne (1995) described narrative analysis as a synthesis of data to

produce a coherent whole. It creates a story which provides a retrospective

analysis and which explains a final outcome. Through narrative analysis I

synthesized the data from its parts into an account or explanation. The final

account was an attempt to fit the data while also bringing meaningfulness that was

not apparent in the data themselves. I synthesized the data collected which

provided an account of the teachers' pedagogy in order to form a coherent

understanding of their experiences teaching ELLs.

Mishler (1986) introduced the idea of making narrative the unit of analysis

in interviews rather than just coding transcripts for key ideas. He emphasized that

the data obtained through the interviews constructs the story which allows the

reader to determine the plausibility of the interpretation to illuminate their

understanding of the question under study.

Schwandt (2007) stated that analyzing qualitative data is recursive and it

begins when data is first generated. The data I collected were broken down by

searching for themes through which patterns were established. There were many

stages in the processes of analysis and interpretation. Analysis meant

systematically asking specific questions of the data to identify any patterns and

relationships.

Data analysis and interpretation were ongoing during the research. I read the transcripts and field notes several times. Collecting the data and analyzing it myself was important to me because it gave me a greater understanding of the unfolding spiral of the interpretive inquiry (Ellis, 1998). Each loop in the spiral helped me to become more intimate with the data. Interpretation and reinterpretation was ongoing as I read the responses from the transcripts and field notes in order to make sense and meaning from the data.

Data were then coded which, according to Creswell (2008), is a process that allows the researcher "to make sense out of the text data" (p. 251). Careful examination of the recorded text allowed me to choose those segments of data that were meaningful and relevant and disregard those that were irrelevant (Creswell, 2008). In the three case studies I conducted, I surveyed the transcripts and looked for occurring themes across all three case studies in order to inform my analysis of the data with respect to my research questions. I organized the data in a three-column table and read and re-read the interview transcripts and made notes in the margins to create categories. From the coding process, data that were similar were combined together to form themes. I then looked for relationships among them. This enabled me to discern the patterns and themes that emerged from the categories.

Cross-case analysis.

There are two stages in analysis of multiple case studies. Upon completion of each case study I conducted an analysis of each one in order to

identify the similarities and differences with the others. I carefully read through

the transcripts from each participant's interviews several times and tried to gain

insights in order to develop a deeper understanding of the teachers' pedagogy.

The cross-case analysis followed the analysis of individual cases and helped me to

identify the common themes among the experiences of the three teachers with

respect to pedagogy, resources, and supports for teaching ELLs. Cross case

analysis can lead to "categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data"

(Merriam, 1998, p. 195). In order to identify the common themes I created a three

column document. The transcribed interview was placed in the middle column.

In the left hand column I assigned a code to each block (segment) of text. The

segments were then categorized in the right hand column according to the general

theme/ideas in each block of text. I identified the most frequent themes in the

transcripts for all three participating teachers. These were then organized into

three metathemes which formed the structure used to analyze the overall data.

The common themes helped me to move to a more general overview and to

identify challenges faced by the teachers, instructional approaches employed by

the teachers, and supports needed to support teaching by the three teachers

teaching ELLs of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I then interpreted

the findings by gaining insights from the themes and how they would contribute

and impact future development of successful teachers' pedagogy.

Pilot study.

I conducted a pilot study with one teacher participant (Sarah) prior to working with the other two teachers in the larger study. "The pilot case study helps investigators to refine their data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed" (Yin, 1994, p. 74). I prepared a series of specific questions that I intended to give to all teachers in the project. These were then tested in the pilot study. The pilot study was used to evaluate the questions for clarity, appropriateness, and relevancy. I found that the questions were useful to elicit the desired information and it was not necessary to eliminate or revise any of the original questions. However, additional questions arose during the interviews with Sarah and I used these in the pilot study and added them to the list of questions to use with the other two participants.

A second reason for the pilot study was to gain experience in participating in the interview process and in recording and analyzing data. This was useful not only in aiding me to become more familiar and comfortable with the questions and the procedure, but also with the scheduling of observations and interviews. In order to make sense of the data from the pilot study, I reviewed the transcripts and my observational notes several times to gain insight about what it was like to teach ELLs in a mainstream classroom.

The pilot study assisted me in several ways. First, it taught me the importance of listening carefully before asking the next question. Secondly, I realized that I would not be able to stick rigidly to the prescribed plan of

observing in a classroom one week and interviewing the teacher the following week. I found that it was more effective to follow up with the interview in the same week as the classroom observation. In the pilot study, Sarah required more flexibility in scheduling than was originally planned. This flexibility was therefore extended to the other two participants in the study.

Trustworthiness and authenticity.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that positivist criteria are not usually appropriate for evaluating qualitative research studies. Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed two alternate sets of criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative inquiry: trustworthiness and authenticity, which they acknowledge as having the appearance of imitating post-positivistic criteria, but which are adapted to qualitative research. Trustworthiness criteria involve the use of multiple accounts which establishes credibility. Some ability to transfer findings to other situations is required. Proper recording and auditing of data increases the dependability of the result. Ensuring good faith (i.e., removing researcher biases as much as possible) enhances confirmability. Authenticity criteria examine how genuine, fair, and meaningful in nature the research is. These criteria allow participants to verify whether responses make sense and clarify their own personal understandings. Authenticity criteria have not been as widely accepted or had the impact of trustworthiness criteria. Overall these criteria assess how findings fit with current knowledge, the degree to which they add more sophisticated

knowledge of a topic, how applicable the inquiry is to the context (relevance), and their ability to be modified as new data emerge (modifiability).

In my study the principle of trustworthiness was observed through conducting multiple interviews with each of the participating individuals so that I had multiple points of reference for any findings. Transferability was enhanced by the depth of description that I used in the case study analysis. Dependability was ensured by proper record keeping and organization of data, and confirmability was assured by adherence to appropriate unbiased interpretation, as much as possible within a qualitative approach. Confirmability can be independently assessed by the reader who is able to see that the data and the interpretation of the data were linked and that the interpretations were not simply my bias or imaginings.

Care was taken to avoid distortion because of my presence, or the bias of either myself or the participants. I had to analyze how plausible the research findings were based on internal and external criteria. I had to ask whether the study can be used by other researchers or will it stimulate other individuals to some type of activity and in what ways the research might help to understand similar situations in other contexts and at other sites.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study was delimited to three teachers who taught in classrooms with a proportion of more than 50% ELLs. It is therefore limited in scope and does not necessarily represent the wider population of teachers who teach within the school

system. As the researcher I had to make decisions about what was directly

significant to the study and I omitted information that did not apply. I also had to

construct and reconstruct the data gathered from the interviews in gaining

knowledge of the teachers' pedagogy.

The study was bounded by numbers (3 teachers), by time (3 months of

data collection), by location (selected classrooms), and culture (social

environment of the school).

Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Alberta according to

the Tri-Council guidelines for ethical research. I also applied to the Cooperative

Activities Program of the appropriate school board in order to gain access to the

schools. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. It was made clear

that participation in the research was free and voluntary. I explained to each

participant that they could withdraw at any time from the study without penalty or

prejudice. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants were protected by

using pseudonyms in the dissertation and transcripts for all persons, schools, and

the city in which the study took place. I was especially sensitive to the

participants' involvement in the study so that data obtained during the research

was private and confidential. I was also cognizant of the fact that I needed to

minimize harm and threat to the participants and others involved in the research.

In particular, I had to be aware of challenges related to non-participants (i.e.,

students in the classroom observational context). If I had perceived any ethical

challenges related to non-participants my intention was to bring these to the attention of my committee for guidance. It turned out that there were none. I provided each participant in the study with an overall interpretive account of the data and asked them to verify the accuracy of the interpretation. Information gathered from each participant will be destroyed after a period of 5 years.

Summary

In summary, the study was an interpretive inquiry case study. I explored the pedagogy of three teachers with respect to their teaching of ELLs in mainstream classrooms. Data collection consisted of interviews, field notes, classroom observations, and a reflective research journal. Themes were identified and codes were assigned to blocks of text from the data collected. A cross case analysis was completed to compare the similarities and differences among the participating teachers.

Chapter Five: Meet the Teachers

Approaching the Participants

My research was conducted with three teachers, Sarah, Lynette and April, in a large urban school district in Alberta. The teachers worked in mainstream classrooms with more than 50% of the student population being ELLs. This percentage of students was chosen to ensure that each teacher was in a situation in which they had to consistently and often think about and work through the issues that were the subject of this study. This enabled both broad and in-depth examination of the questions posed. The selected teachers had received no formal education in teaching English as a Second Language during their university programs.

Description of Sites

Sarah.

> *Sarah saw herself as a catalyst accelerating her students' learning. This was a wonderful image since the classroom dynamics were shifting with respect to different cultural groups of students. Sarah wanted to be a change agent. Her earlier experience as a substitute teacher had sparked her interest in teaching diverse students. She said "it was through this experience that I really started to touch base with a lot of different cultures." Sarah was interested in trying to find ways to teach these students. This was a struggle for her but she wanted to learn and search for ways to teach her students that were meaningful to her and her students alike. From our conversations and the observations I made in her classroom, I came to the conclusion that Sarah truly was a catalyst for her students' learning.*

Sarah was the subject of my pilot study. She taught at Claverly School, an elementary/junior high school built in 1961. In 2010/2011 the school had a population of 410 students. A high proportion of the students came from minority cultural and linguistic groups. A number of different programs were provided at Claverly school including Balanced Literacy[8], Interactions (a program for autistic students), and a Transition Program for refugee and immigrant students. After-school programs included academic support for students as well as recreation and creative pursuits with an arts focus (i.e., dance, arts, and crafts). The school also had an Early Education Multicultural Program, an Opportunity Program[9] for Grades 1 to 9, and a Literacy Program for Grades 7 to 9. The school offered English as a Second Language classes for adults. From my observation of the area, homes consisted of single-family dwellings and rented apartments.

Description and physical setting of the classroom.

Sarah was an experienced teacher who had been teaching at Claverly School for 3 years. She taught Grade 2 at the time of the study. Her students came from diverse cultural backgrounds including Somali (9), Vietnamese (1), Sudanese (2), Guatemalan (1), Congolese (1), Bosnian (1), Uzbekistani (1), First

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[8] Balanced Literacy is based on the work of Allington, Stuetzel, Shake, & Lamarche (1986) and further developed by Brailsford. It was first implemented by the Metropolis School Board in 2002 for division one, and then in division two in 2003. There are three key components to the program; Word Study, Reading and Writing. The training program consists of two years of in-services and coaching for teachers provided by reading consultants from the school district. Word study involves phonological awareness, phonemic sequencing and phonetic knowledge. The reading component involves read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading. The writing involves write aloud, shared writing, guided writing and independent writing.

[9] This program assists students who experience significant academic and social challenges. Programming focuses on literacy, numeracy and skills necessary for responsible independent living and employment.

Nations (1), and Euro Canadian (4). Nineteen of the students were boys and two were girls. Students from each of the above backgrounds had a different first language except the First Nations and Euro Canadian students.

Sarah's classroom[10] was situated in the northwest corner of the school. Her desk was placed in a corner of the room as indicated in Figure 5.1, and beside it were shelves of bins containing classroom supplies. Against the middle of the same wall there was a semi-circular table where Sarah taught guided reading. On one section of another wall, letters of the alphabet were displayed and on the other section were "I Can Statements" related to a geometry unit in math. Beneath the alphabet letters, where students could easily access them, were shelves with bins containing "leveled books." On the third wall there was a white board and above it the months of the year were displayed, as well as a number line from one to 100. A Smart Board was also situated against this wall. The classroom rules and expectations were displayed on the same wall and a tally sheet was easily accessible for Sarah to record the groups that were working well and focused on the task at hand. On the fourth wall there was a word wall that displayed the words the students were learning in their reading lessons.

There were several small tables carefully placed around the room where students could work when they had center time or if they wished to work quietly. The classroom had tiled flooring but there was a carpeted area towards the front of the classroom where students sat to listen to stories Sarah read aloud. Students

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[10] Please see the Appendix for photographs of Sarah's classroom.

could also use this area during center time if they were playing a game or reading. The students' desk arrangements in the classroom varied from time to time. On my first visit to the classroom the desks were arranged in a U shape. On subsequent visits they were arranged in groups of five and sometimes they were in rows. Sarah arranged the groups so that there were mixed abilities of English speaking students and ELLs. She believed that this type of grouping was necessary so that ELLs would be able to learn the English language easily and get help if required.

Figure 5.1 *Physical Setting of Sarah's Classroom (North is at top of diagram)*

1. Teachers Desk
2. Semi-circular Table
3. Leveled Book Bins
4. Alphabet Letter Display
5. Word Wall
6. Desks
7. Counter
8. Sink
9. East Wall Display
10. Smart Board
11. White Board
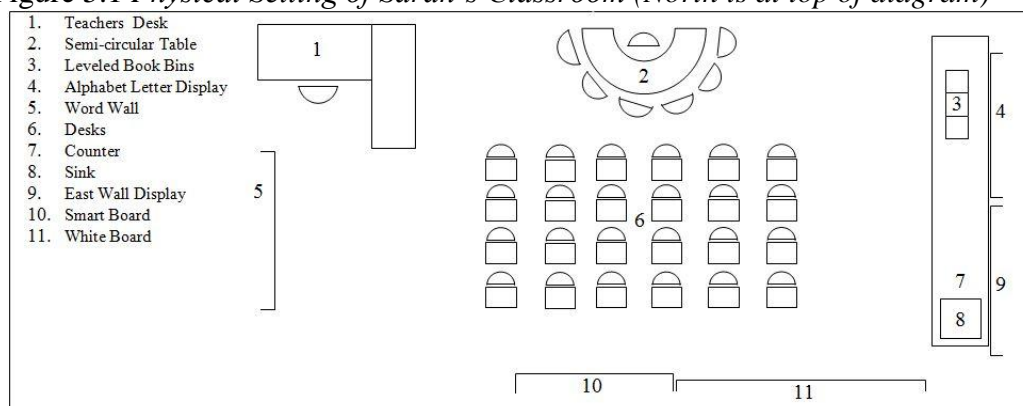
Sarah's personal background and teaching experience.

Sarah discussed two specific formative experiences that influenced her development as a teacher. One of these stemmed from an essay she wrote when she was a Grade 8 student. She had a one-on-one experience with her teacher while writing the essay, and she believed that this experience taught her the value of one-on-one teaching. The second experience that Sarah recalled from her own schooling was based on sight learning in reading. She had difficulty with sight

learning because she was not a visual learner and could not remember all the words she was taught. Therefore, in her own pedagogy she attempted to use a variety of learning approaches in order to accommodate different learning styles.

> I integrate, I don't go with any particular one form or method of teaching reading and writing but I try to give children choices and I try to give them enough different strategies that they can use in order to access their own way of learning how to read or write so I do use phonics and I do use rote, poetry and I do use just listening to people read and I use a lot of picture books. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

Sarah obtained a Bachelor of Education degree in 1973 and began her teaching career in a small rural community. During that time she taught kindergarten and Grades 1 through to 3 for approximately 4 years. Following this she worked as a supply teacher for 3 years and then taught for a private kindergarten for a further 5 years. Sarah then took time off teaching to raise a family and later obtained a Masters degree in Theology specializing in counseling. She worked for a while at a church bookstore, but eventually went back into teaching. Sarah applied to the local Public School Board and worked as a supply teacher from 2002 to 2009.

Sarah had no formal education in teaching ELLs. She had taken a linguistics course during her initial teacher education at university but did not find it relevant to her teaching. She did not have any courses in language acquisition. Sarah began her teaching career in the early 1970s and the students in her

classroom over the years consisted mostly of native English speakers. She did note that once, early in her career, she had a student in her class who was from Germany. This particular student did not speak English but Sarah did not think much about it at that time. It was not until she arrived in the city and saw the diversity of language backgrounds of many of the students in her classrooms that she became aware of ELLs as a particular student group. She taught music to division two students and later worked in a pull-out program in both divisions one and two. In the pull-out program she worked primarily with ELLs building their reading skills.

The pull-out program was the beginning of her experience working with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of ELLs. Many of her students at that time were from India and Pakistan with some from Pacific Rim countries such as Korea and China. She found this situation challenging. Sarah said in one of the interviews that although in the pull-out program she was trying to teach her students to read, the homeroom teacher thought that the students were losing some of what they had learned in the transition from the pull-out program back into the classroom. They were not integrating what they had learned in the pull-out program consistently into their regular classroom work.

Sarah finally got a full-time teaching position at Claverly School where she taught junior high students. Many of her students in this school had lived in refugee camps and had been traumatized psychologically and sometimes physically by their experiences. She came to find that as a group they differed

significantly from her previous ELLs. At Claverly School, the students not only

had little or no English but also little or no formal education in their own

language. During her first assignment at Claverly, the school was undergoing

renovation and there was no place to set up a classroom for ELLs. Sarah started

teaching in a storage room. She began with seven students but gradually the

number grew to 17. There was a mosaic of cultures in her class.

> there was a real mix of cultures. There were kids from Afghanistan,
>
> Pakistan, a girl from Iran, some Somali students, Karen[11] students. There
>
> was quite a mix. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

Although Sarah found her teaching assignment challenging, she enjoyed

the students and found their previous life stories and experiences interesting.

> That was a wonderful year, I just loved learning the kids' stories and that's
>
> a lot of how they learned English. I would share stories, we did a whole
>
> theme around where they came from . . . and I learned so much from them.
>
> (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

However, what Sarah learned from these stories caused her to realize that even

though she had worked previously in a variety of classroom situations she could

not imagine how difficult it was for this group of students to assimilate into their

new culture. Not understanding the conditions they came from was something

that Sarah had to deal with as a classroom teacher, and she found this difficult

because she had no previous background on how to integrate ELLs into the

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[11] Karen – a Burmese refugee group from northwest Thailand.

mainstream classroom. However, Sarah believed she was able to build on her students' narratives to inform her teaching. In working at Claverly School on a regular basis (and not as a substitute teacher) she came to realize that the challenges were more than she had anticipated. The needs were far greater and more complex than she had expected. Her responsibility for teaching ELLs had changed the way she viewed her teaching role.

Sarah understood the concepts of BICS and CALP and thought that ELLs learned BICS more readily than CALP (See Chapter two).

> Well my understanding about BICS is that they can pick up BICS pretty fast . . . they should probably be proficient at that within 2 years, but I've seen it happen actually faster within the first year they can get pretty proficient. (T1S INT 5, April 2011)

Sarah used her understanding of BICS to gather information about ELLs because they were able to communicate much more easily with her and with other students in the class. Sarah noted that in regard to BICS, ELLs were able to learn basic English faster than she had previously been aware. Sarah's observation was that students were learning BICS faster than is reported in the literature. There are two reasons Sarah might have noticed faster attainment of BICS. One of these is that her students were in the early grades and they were learning English faster than they would in the later grades. A second reason might be Sarah's pedagogy in which she concentrated on providing one-on-one attention to students who had the greatest needs.

Sarah's pedagogical approach.

Sarah was passionate about teaching ELLs, and believed in creating a positive classroom climate conducive to learning. It was important to her that all cultures were accepted in her learning community. "There is a lot that happens in my classroom that's not from a book. It's not even a strategy . . . it's about the atmosphere and the community that you build and how everyone is working together and accepting where everybody else is at kind of thing" (T1S INT 3, April 2011). Sarah explained that her role with her students was to motivate them and to initiate and instill a love for learning. She was genuinely interested in their background experiences and was hopeful that they would aspire to do well in their futures as they continued their journey through school.

Sarah demonstrated a caring attitude towards her students and their learning. She attended to individual students, working one-on-one with them or spending time working with them in small groups. She said that her goal was to accomplish the best for her students and to make sure that she explained ideas in simple ways for them to understand. In response to a question about her interest in teaching, the following exchange occurred:

> J.N.: So, you know, with your early experiences or interests in teaching ELLs, what really encouraged you to do that?
>
> S: I really felt an energy for it, I really felt energetic about it and there was like something in the core of my being that it was just really, it was like a

passion. Who knows where it came from? It was just there. (T1S INT 2,

April 2011)

Sarah saw herself as a catalyst and one that was hopeful in instilling a love for

learning with her students. It was important for her to see them integrate in a new

culture and be successful.

Well, I guess I see myself as a catalyst, someone who sparks an interest in

learning about life within the Canadian context . . . to kind of guide them

in a way that I see they are going to kind of move towards if they're going

to do well in Canadian culture. (T1S INT 5, April 2011)

She encouraged ELLs to talk in order to learn the language because she was well

aware that development of oral language skills precedes that of writing or reading

skills. She employed strategies such as "think/pair/share" and peer learning to

help ELLs in this process. Sarah also recognized that some of the ELLs were

traumatized from their previous experiences as refugees and were not used to a

structured environment for learning or traditional methods of instruction.

The concept of the learning spiral[12] came up a few times in my interviews

with Sarah. She believed that learning was a spiral and that whatever concepts

students learned in one grade they could build on in another grade to develop

further understanding as they progressed through school.

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[12]The concept of the spiral, referred to as the spiral curriculum, was first developed by (Bruner, 1960). It refers to the idea of revisiting basic ideas over and over, building upon them and elaborating to the level of full understanding and mastery.

You know learning is a spiral and so hopefully whatever they have learned here will come up again and that term [here Sarah is talking about academic vocabulary] will come back and maybe it will be reinforced more at a different grade level. (T1S INT 4, April 2011)

Sarah believed that social interaction was important because the ELLs could learn from the native English-speaking students. However, she was also cognizant of the fact that she had to be very careful in partnering students. Her observation was that putting a high academic level native English speaker with a less proficient ELL did not work. Sarah found that some of the ELLs who were slightly more proficient in the English language worked more effectively with the less proficient ELLs.

Sarah circulated around the classroom often to check on students and she commonly gave reminders to students to maintain focus on their work. She also read out loud with students: for example, when reading the Word Wall[13] everyone read in unison. While reading a story, Sarah would often stop and explain vocabulary and what a word meant in context. Since ELLs were at different levels of proficiency in their English language development, some students did not always understand what she meant. Therefore she would follow up with her students to check their understanding and clarify any misconceptions they might have.

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[13] A word wall is a place in the classroom used to display high frequency words studied in class where students can access them easily.

One of the things I noticed about Sarah was that she would work to get students who were dependent on her for help to move towards more independence. Most of the native English-speaking students in the class could work independently, as could some of the ELLs with higher language abilities. Some students needed assistance and were dependent on Sarah. She would take these students aside and work more intensely with them. However, she had difficulty finding enough time to spend with this group. While she embraced the idea of independence for this small group of ELLs, she often found herself having to deal with other classroom situations such as making sure other students were on task and focused.

Keeping order in a class with 19 boys was at times challenging for Sarah. She wanted her students to learn in a relaxed environment and her intention was to engage all students at all times, but she found this to be challenging. Sarah had learned from experience working with ELLs that some, especially those from refugee situations, were not used to a structured learning environment. In fact some of the students exhibited disruptive behaviours and at times were off task. It was difficult to keep track of what some of her students were doing at all times, especially during center time and when she was working with individual students. During whole class instruction she was able to keep track of what was going on. She often reminded students to stay on task and reviewed the class rules as a reminder to stay focused. It was noticeable that the native English speakers often monopolized the answers to questions. On some occasions when an ELL had the

answer, Sarah acknowledged and recognized their contribution and encouraged them to share. Some of the ELLs who were not as proficient in English remained quiet. It was obvious that Sarah was aware of this tendency and she tried to engage all the students but this was difficult at times because they were not able to express their ideas effectively.

Sarah willingly encouraged parent volunteers to work in her class, but stated that there were very few volunteers and those who did volunteer were not present very often. On one of my visits she actually had two volunteers. One of them was a parent who came whenever it was convenient for her and the other was a work experience student who came once a week for 4 weeks. These volunteers were both Somali women and Sarah welcomed them. She assigned each volunteer to a student who needed assistance. The women were able to assist students by using their own language to bridge understanding and make a connection with the English words that students had difficulty with. Sarah was very receptive to this type of involvement because she believed it was important for the students to hear their own language as well as a new one. However, she told me that what I saw on this particular visit was not common, and that there were very few parent volunteers available.

Lynette.

Lynette was a veteran teacher who had taught for many years. She saw herself as a practical teacher. Her philosophy was based on her personal practical knowledge and her teaching was based on a "trial and error" approach. Her early experience was on a reserve with Aboriginal students. She was unable to speak their

language so she had to learn ways to communicate that were meaningful to them. Lynette found that using hands-on activities and gestures engaged Aboriginal students in the learning process.

At the time of my study, Lynette had a number of students from different cultures who spoke many different languages. In our conversations she often mentioned that some of the cultural experiences she had on the reserve helped her to develop some understanding of the students she faced in her classroom. Although her practical experience was useful she had many cultural issues to deal with in her classroom and she thought that she was only touching the surface in trying to meet all the needs presented.

Brown Street School, where Lynette taught, was a K to 6 elementary school that was opened in 1978. In 2010/2011 the school population was 285 students. The school was considered to be a high needs school and had a large population of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The student community included 22 different home languages in addition to English. Many students were born overseas and some students came from refugee camps in different parts of the world. The homes around Brown Street School consisted mainly of single-family dwellings and apartments. There were many special programs for the local community and the students at Brown Street School, for example a daily breakfast program and a daily snack program. There was also an Aboriginal liaison coordinator who worked primarily with Aboriginal students. Brown Street School was involved in a project called APPLE School Health Initiative which promoted physical activity and nutritious eating, the Breakfast for Learning Alberta Program, and the Food for Thought Lunch Program for qualifying students in need.

The academic programs at Brown Street School included a full day kindergarten program, Grades 1 through 6 programs, Balanced Literacy, Reading Recovery, and a Behaviour and Learning Assistance Program for division one and two students. There was also an Early Learning Program for students in the year prior to entering kindergarten.

Description and physical setting of the classroom.

At the time of my research, Lynette was teaching Grade 2 at Brown Street School. There were 11 boys and 9 girls in her class, including 11 students who had either immigrated to Canada themselves or whose parents had immigrated from Somalia (6), India (1), Iraq (1), Uzbekistan (1), Vietnam (1), and Lebanon (1). She also had nine native English speakers including four First Nations students. Most ELLs in the class remained in Lynette's classroom all day. These students varied in their language proficiency. However, each morning during the week, two students with emergent English language skills attended a pull-out program and returned to the class in the afternoon.

Lynette taught in a portable classroom attached to the main school building towards the south end of Brown Street School. Upon entering the classroom there was a cloak room where students hung their coats and backpacks. Students' art work was displayed on the walls in the cloak room. On the walls of the classroom itself there were many visuals such as colourful posters and charts. On the one wall of the classroom at the top, close to the ceiling, was information related to writing. Directly underneath it was a bulletin board on which was

placed the name of the student "Star of the Week," class jobs for students, a math chart, and a calendar chart. On the lower wall posters with positive learning ideas were displayed and there were shelves with books organized according to reading levels A to R. There was also a bulletin board with a map of Canada and related information, and a chart displaying numbers from 1 to 120. As shown in Figure 5.2, Lynette's desk was in a corner of the room. Along one wall there was another bulletin board with Word Wall words displayed and a pocket chart with the names of those students assigned to different centers while Lynette worked with her daily Guided Reading group. There were also more shelves with bins labeled with different subjects containing students' work. Towards the back of the classroom near the opposite wall was a semi-circular table for Guided Reading. On the side wall there was another number chart with numbers from 1 to 100 and the Smart Board. Beside the Smart Board was a white board and a pocket chart containing words from a previous spelling lesson. Above the white board and the Smart Board were the letters of the alphabet. At one corner of the room there were shelves with art supplies and on the adjacent wall there were cupboards for storage, shelves for paper storage, and counter space. In front of the cupboards there was a table for students to work at. The classroom floor was carpeted.

Desks in the classroom were organized in two groups with students facing each other. Lynette had organized students in this manner in order that they could

provide peer support and assistance to other students who had less proficiency in English.

Figure 5.2. *Physical Setting of Lynette's Classroom (Top of the diagram is the west side)*

1. White Board
2. Counter/Storage
3. Guided Reading Table
4. Guided Reading Chart
5. Word Wall
6. Smart Board
7. Teachers Desk
8. Bulletin Board/Canada Information
9. Calendar/Star of Week
10. Book Bins
11. Desks
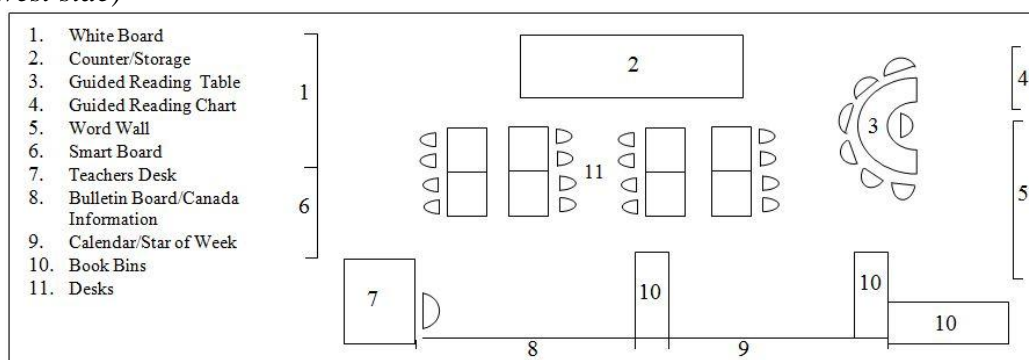
Lynette's personal background and teaching experience.

Lynette believed that her role was to teach all students including those who came from different cultural and ethnic groups.

> I don't really consider myself an ELL teacher, that's the problem. Is that okay? I just feel I'm a teacher of children and children come from different areas and I don't try to isolate them from the other students and so I just want them to be successful. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette's first exposure to minority language students was in teaching Aboriginal students on a reserve. As Lynette reflected on this experience she recognized that some of the ideas she had developed there would transfer to teaching in her current situation. I asked Lynette whether her own teachers in school had any influence on her teaching or her approach.

> L: No, I had no role model . . . just [learned] to have emotional bonds with them. I think you learn more from teachers who have an emotional bond

with you than if you're distant from them. I think they need a lot of caring and that sort of thing. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette attended college for 2 years, transferring to a university B.Ed. program to complete her studies. During her teacher education program she did not take any courses in linguistics. Lynette taught for 27 years, mostly in division one, in a variety of situations beginning on Aboriginal reserves. After teaching on reserves for 3 years Lynette returned to the city and continued teaching in elementary schools part-time and then on a full-time basis. Subsequently, her teaching was interrupted by a maternity leave. In the city, Lynette taught primarily native English speakers but more recently she had been teaching ELLs because of demographic changes in her school.

Lynette accepted her first teaching assignment on a reserve in northern Alberta because there were very few jobs available at that time. Lynette told the following story about her teaching there.

> I worked up north in Indian and Northern Affairs at Spring Creek. Indian and Northern Affairs had responsibility for the school in the first year that I was there. Then in the next year Indian and Northern Affairs gave the Band control of education and basically they were not trained on how to organize or run a school board so it was difficult. I enjoyed the native children. I enjoyed living in a native community. It gave me a good insight into a different culture, a different world. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette's job, living and learning in a new culture, was not without some
challenges, however she was prepared to put all her efforts into making her
experience successful.

> One of the challenges was they did not speak English. I had kindergarten,
> Grade 1, 2, and 3. I had all the division one. I had 42 students in my
> room and they would come in and not speak English and also their culture
> was different. A lot of my students brought in spitoons and they had
> chewing tobacco. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette accepted whatever cultural practices the students brought with them to
school. The Band paid her salary and she was expected to uphold the Band's
traditional values. The students in Lynette's class spoke Woodland Cree. Lynette
was unable to speak Cree and she found this difficult. She had to learn some
basic vocabulary quickly in order to communicate with her students.

> Basically I had to learn quite quickly commands, basically, come here, sit
> down, listen, you know that sort of thing. I learned Cree, a little bit of
> Cree, I could speak it at the end because I was the minority in that culture.
> (T2 L 1, April 2011)

The first year teaching on the reserve was difficult for Lynette. She did not have
any role models to emulate or veteran teachers to provide mentoring to her.

> I was working nonstop. I worked 7 days a week and 16 hours a day
> because I had to learn how to incorporate what I learned, and I took native
> studies in university. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

The Band had no experience of how a school operated, which provided extra stress for the teachers. One of the things Lynette found interesting was that the Band members in the community would bring their infant children, up to the age of 10 months, and drop them off at the school if they wanted time to themselves. She said that the Band members thought that by paying her a salary she was in charge of all the children on the reserve, so one of her first jobs was to educate the Band members about her role, including the fact that she only taught school-aged children.

Lynette kept a collection of artifacts from the reserve that she thought would someday come in handy in her future teaching assignments.

> I collected some clothing, some mukluks, some moccasins, and beadwork. I was also in a sweat lodge, feast, different cultural events, a powwow, a sweat lodge, all these things were different to me. I brought that along with me . . . I use some of those, the cultural, when I'm teaching native kids now because I know where I can step and where I can't step in regards to communicating with their parents, their Mooshum, their Kookum, that sort of thing. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

The Aboriginal cultural experiences she participated in as well as the artifacts she collected were meaningful to her. The experience and the knowledge Lynette gained from one culture provided background information and made her more sensitive to other cultures. In spite of the challenges, she loved working on the reserve and would be willing to do so again.

J.N: So in a way that experience may have provided some background for you in terms of how you relate to Aboriginal students. Do you think that was a good thing?

L: Absolutely, absolutely I would do it again. I understood their art, I understood their language. I understood how the relationship was between the elders and the children and the parents and the children. I lived that for 2 years. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Upon leaving the reserve, Lynette taught Grade 1 in a small northern community for 2 years. She then left this job and moved to another reserve to teach Grade 3. This was a difficult assignment because the principal was the grandmother of one of her very disruptive and violent students, creating a potential conflict of interest.

After working on the reserves Lynette returned to the city and took a maternity leave. She then taught Grade 1 for 7 years at two different schools. A 1-year leave of absence followed, after which she returned to teach Grade 4 for 3 years. The next 6 years included a second maternity leave, substitute teaching, and job sharing assignments. Lynette then joined Brown Street School and had been teaching Grade 3 students, including ELLs, for the last 3 years. In the last 6 years she had seen the demographics of her classroom change drastically. Six or 7 years ago she did not have much experience teaching ELLs other than for her experience on the reserve. Now, she had a lot more practical experience in teaching ELLs. Lynette was aware that her previous teaching experiences on the reserve had an impact on how she approached teaching her current ELLs. She

was unable to speak the Cree language and had to abide by the rules established

by the Band council. This included allowing elementary students to chew tobacco

and use spittoons in the classroom. Lynette was a linguistic and cultural minority

in the classroom so she was able to appreciate and understand what is was like in

such a situation.

Lynette's own personal recollection and experience as a young student

was that school was confusing. She had a Ukrainian background and her parents

wanted her to learn the language associated with her own culture. While this was

difficult for her as a child, it gave her an appreciation of the challenges faced by

students who spoke one language at home and another at school.

> When I was growing up . . . Ukrainian people mix their languages
>
> together, I was not really fluent in either language. I was a child with
>
> basically no language. So when I went to school my parents were told
>
> absolutely stop one language, which was basically Ukrainian. (T2L INT
>
> 1, April 2011)

Lynette's earlier experience in school speaking a language other than English

helped her identify with ELLs. As a student it was obvious to her that her

teachers did not want her to speak her first language (Ukrainian) in school. This

was problematic for Lynette because her first language was seen by her teacher as

a detriment to her education. She had firsthand experience of the dominant

language taking precedence in the mainstream classroom and students being

forced to assimilate. Piper (1993) discussed this problematization of different

languages. Such students are identified as problems or as slow learners by their teachers simply on the basis of their language. Cummins (2000) made reference to this stating that students' minority languages were seen as inferior and therefore students were coerced into learning the dominant language to survive in the classroom. Students were caught in a situation that Cummins (2000) referred to as the 'coercive relation of power' and were essentially helpless.

Lynette's pedagogical approach.

Lynette and her students had a special relationship. Her caring and positive attitude was evident. The students respected her and she was quick to recognize any concerns the students had when they entered the classroom. There was an obvious bond between her and her students, something she recalled and appreciated from her own early experience as a student.

Engaging all students in the learning process was ongoing in Lynette's class. This was illustrated through class discussion and students working in groups or with a partner. She believed that social interaction was important to help ELLs develop their oral language skills. Even though some ELLs were able to communicate and follow instructions in the classroom they still had difficulty with their academic language. Lynette found that reviewing material and repeating content helped to develop the students' learning. She said, "You have to do a lot of repetition, repetition, repetition and you have to continue that repetition. It's not teaching in isolation" (T2L INT 3, April 2011).

Lynette also used gestures, pictures, peer teaching, modelling, group

teaching, and oral discussions in her classroom. Lynette's commitment to

teaching her students through a variety of modes stemmed from her desire to

ensure that all of them achieved their full potential. Her ultimate goal was for

them to make continuous progress and recognize that they were capable learners.

> I hope that I can get these students (ELLs) to grade level. I'm hoping they
>
> slowly grow so that they feel good about themselves and that they're
>
> growing in their education. There's my doubts—I feel that sometimes I
>
> need more training in ESL. I need to know what works. I need to know
>
> from other teachers that okay you know what, Lynette, this is what really
>
> worked for me in my classroom and I could say you know what, this
>
> worked for me in my classroom, I have successes . . . It's very difficult,
>
> sometimes, to teach the Alberta curriculum to ESL students when they
>
> don't have the background knowledge or the background experience to
>
> deal with the concepts that I'm supposed to be teaching. (T2L INT 2,
>
> April 2011)

Lynette was clearly challenged at times and believed that learning was a struggle

for ELLs because they found themselves in a new culture. For many of them the

school environment was also new. Lynette, however, saw that success could be

achieved by engaging the students in the learning process together. Much of her

work involved modifying the curriculum and searching for new ideas. Lynette

realized that the need to balance her pedagogy meant that learning had to be

carefully structured for ELLs, otherwise they might find it overwhelming. She believed that if the curriculum was properly presented in small amounts in a sequentially organized manner, ELLs can readily experience success. Lynette knew she had a tough job, not only in dealing with the constraints of the curriculum but also because ELLs often did not have the background knowledge required to understand the concepts she was trying to teach.

> J.N.: So what were you thinking when you realized that there was a lot of ELL students? What thoughts came to your mind?
>
> L: How can I set up my classroom and how can I make sure my lesson plans include them? How can I make sure that each one of them has their individual successes and just to go slowly with them and make sure that everyone's needs are met, which is difficult because I have to make probably 10 lessons within that one lesson plan and making sure that 10 different children's needs are met and how will I meet those needs as well as the whole group. It is challenging. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette defined the ELL classroom as one in which the teacher had to take into account many variables that mainstream classrooms without ELLs do not have. It was apparent that she was concerned about the pressures of the classroom in all facets of her work. This was compounded by several factors: having to make sure that the teacher prepared several lessons of different ability levels, meeting the individual needs of her students, working with multiple languages and cultural backgrounds, and coaching her students for success on

district level tests. Lynette responded well to the complexity of the situation. She

tried to program appropriately for her students to achieve individual success and

to cope with what was for many of them a new environment for learning.

> I have worked in high-class schools, basically high society schools where I
>
> liked it but I was not fulfilled enough because whatever I did for them they
>
> kept saying "Is this enough, is this all?" And I'm going "Okay, what
>
> would you like?" They were so used to having everything given to them,
>
> a Christmas party in my classroom for instance had to be a big one-week
>
> kind of celebration where [now] . . . I have to make sure that I bring in all
>
> cultures and all different aspects and more than just one point of view
>
> whereas those [previous] children just had one point of view. (T2L INT 1,
>
> April 2011)

Lynette had taught in schools in relatively affluent areas but while these affluent

situations were attractive and with different challenges than a lower socio-

economic area, she preferred working with the latter.

> Lynette said that she found it difficult to get books about other cultures

and was of the opinion that not many were available. She used Aboriginal

literature, and since she had taught on a reserve she was familiar with traditional

Aboriginal ways of life. I wanted to find out in particular what multicultural

books she used in her class.

> Oh for, culture, I make sure that there are native books for native children
>
> . . . We will watch how *Ryan's Well* in social studies teaches how some

people don't have clean water and why are we are thankful we have clean water and what kind of survival, because some of these children have come from these places. (T2L INT 2, April 2011)

Lynette was aware that culture and tradition were important to her students and she tried to embrace this by having them share their stories. Lynette realized that the background knowledge of her students was important and it would be an asset to integrate it into her pedagogy and more importantly in the curriculum wherever possible to enhance teaching and learning. However, it became a challenge when ELLs were not well versed in English and they had difficulty articulating their stories. She also believed that to acquire background knowledge in the new culture, students needed to be exposed to a variety of experiences in their new culture. Lynette tried to help her students by providing artifacts, using appropriate instructional strategies, and different ways to build background knowledge about Canadian life.

Lynette had many challenges in teaching ELLs, not only because they were from a variety of linguistically diverse backgrounds, but also because some were refugees. This is important to note because she found that teaching refugee students was different from teaching other ELLs. Their ability to sit in a classroom and follow instructions was limited, as they usually had not experienced classroom discipline previously. Lynette recognized this was going to be a problem and she had to gradually ease students into the new classroom setting if they were going to be successful.

>Sometimes they come from refugee camps around the world and they don't know the Canadian culture, they're used to running around and not sitting still and not listening. They were free basically and some of them have no formal education at all so the idea of actually coming to school and participating in working as a team or as a group in a classroom is difficult for them but I would rather work here because I find it more rewarding. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

Lynette thought the home and school connection was an important supporting component that was missing for most ELLs. Involving parents in her classroom was something that she tried to embrace. Lynette tried to encourage parents to volunteer in her classroom and had an open door policy. However, despite her encouragement, there was almost no parental involvement in either her class or the school. There were various reasons that Lynette cited for this. Many parents did not have a good command of English and did not feel they could adequately communicate with her. Others believed that they did not have the necessary skills to help their children. In addition, parents were often distrustful of authority because of past experiences in their countries of origin.

>I beg them for parent volunteers, I beg, I plead, I phone, I'll do whatever else. The only problem is they have to have a background check. They are scared to put their signature on something they don't know what they are signing away for. (T2L INT 4, May 2011)

April

> *April saw herself as having some understanding of different cultures. "I have been all over the world. Working with the cruise line helped me to build my understanding working with other cultures".*
>
> *April had been exposed to two cultures while growing up: one was Ukrainian and the other Aboriginal. This helped her to some degree to relate to her current ELL students. In addition, she had worked in settings with diverse students and some of her experiences there helped her to develop her confidence in teaching them. She was devoted to her students and wanted them to be successful at school. April had many challenges and indicated that she needed to have access to a variety of resources to meet the needs of her students. At times she was overwhelmed because she was involved in both the new teacher induction program[14] and the Balanced Literacy Program. Her time was stretched to the limit.*

April taught at Findlay School which had a Chinese Mandarin bilingual program in addition to the regular English language elementary program. April worked in the English program with a Grade 3 class. The population of the school consisted of 183 students in the Chinese program, 178 in the English program, and 44 students classified as other.[15] In total there were 405 students attending the school. In addition to the main school building there were two portable classrooms attached. The homes around the school consisted of apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes.

The program and organization of Findlay School focused on academic excellence and positive citizenship supported by committed teachers and sound

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[14] Teacher Induction Program is required for all teachers on a first year probationary contract with the local School Board.
[15] District Education and Early Education students.

resources. The English Core Program consisted of kindergarten through to Grade 6 and the Chinese (Mandarin) Bilingual program also ran from Kindergarten through to Grade 6. I noted that English and Mandarin program students interacted and collaborated wherever possible. Additional programs at the school consisted of an Early Learning program, Special Needs Classes, Reading Recovery, Balanced Literacy, and Character Education. In addition, extra-curricular activities to support and extend learning experiences consisted of Safety Patrols, Running Club, Choir, and Hand Bells. At various times during the school year clubs such as library, computer, drama, noon-hour intramurals, and Chinese musical instruments were offered. After school programs consisted of Art Instruction, Kung-Fu, Chinese Dance, Badminton, and various other athletic activities. The school had a parent council, volunteer program, and a Key Communicator (school information). The latter was a member of the parent council and attended meetings at school and with the trustees as well as the Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association.

Description and physical setting of the classroom.

April was in the third year of her teaching career, all of which had been at Findlay School. Students in April's class included those born in Somalia (9), Mexico (1), Ethiopia (1), Fiji (1), Kurdistan (1), Palestine (1), Turkey (1), and the Caribbean (1), as well as eight Canadian-born children including three First Nations students. Out of a class of 23 students, 19 were ELLs. There were 14 boys and nine girls. Her Grade 3 classroom was in a portable, which was attached

to the west end of the main school (See Figure 5.3). There were several posters

displayed around the classroom as well as charts related to classroom rules and

job assignments. The wall opposite the classroom door held a white board, a

pocket chart with a Making Words chart, a numbers chart, and bins containing

students' work. Above this were the letters of the alphabet. The desks were

arranged in groups of three facing the white board in a linear fashion and students

sat beside each other. April's desk was situated in one corner of the room. On

the adjacent wall was the Smart Board as well as cupboards for storage, shelves

for paper storage, and counter space with more bins containing books. There was

also a book case displaying a variety of fiction and non-fiction books. Towards

the back of the classroom was a semi-circular table for Guided Reading and

directly behind the table were bins with leveled reading books. On an adjacent

wall there was a Word Wall displaying words learned during the year and beside

it was some of the students' written work. The classroom floor was carpeted.

Figure 5.3. *Physical Setting of April's Classroom (Top of diagram is north)*
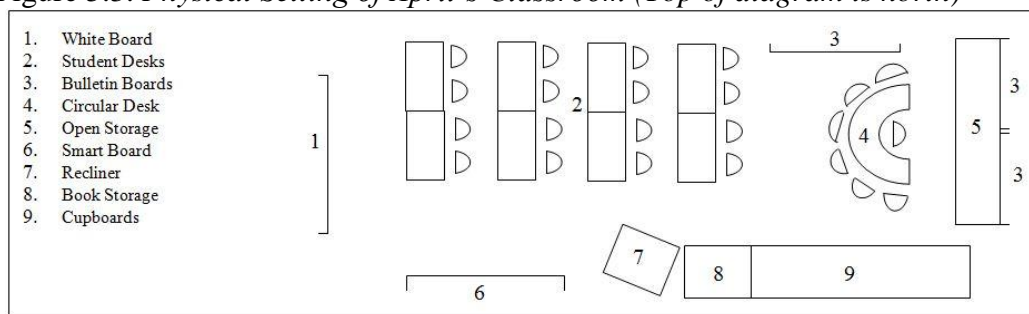
April's personal background and teaching experience.

April attended a school in a small town in Alberta for Grades K to 12. She

had always aspired to a career in teaching. During her time in school April valued

working with one of her teachers, whom she respected, on a work experience program. This experience provided encouragement for her to move into a teaching career.

> I really got along with her. I thought she was great, she was a Grade 1 teacher, her name is Ms. Jimmer. I didn't have her as a teacher before, she was a big influence. I don't know, just everything she did, she was so organized and very patient . . . I thought "Wow, I'd just like to be like her." (T3A INT 1, May 2011)

April recalled from her own experience the times when she thought it was especially fun to learn at school, and so she wanted school to be an enjoyable place for her students to learn.

> I mean just little things like trying to use humour in the classroom. I remember, you know, you look back at things you remember, the fun classes. It's the days you got to cook something, or the days you go out snowshoeing, and you got to have hot chocolate, those things that you remember. I remember my Aztec unit, we got to have tacos after. Soft tacos, and I remember that so I just think it is important to include some fun aspects to the teaching and you can make the fun a learning experience too. (T3A INT 6, June 2011)

> April attended college for 2 years and then transferred to a university where she completed her B.Ed. degree. During her studies she was involved in several educationally-related jobs and volunteer work. Her job assignments

varied and included working in an inner city daycare, working at the Green Shack program (a summer community day program for children), running an inner city arts and crafts program, and volunteering at various schools. These experiences further encouraged her to complete her education to become a teacher.

Upon graduation from university, April took a position working aboard a cruise line with the award winning children's program "Adventure Ocean." While in this position she reported that she developed numerous skills such as classroom management. She had to work with groups of up to 50 3- to 5-year-olds, 100 9- to 11-year-olds, and 150 teenagers at once. She was involved in creating theme-based activities such as science by "High Touch High Tech" and "Art by Crayola." April also dealt with managerial aspects of the position such as handling positive and negative parent feedback. In addition, she developed skills in areas such as leadership, communication, and organization. After she finished working for the cruise line she began volunteering with a local playschool and later took a position as a supply teacher with the Apple Society, a special needs school. April commented that she had been successful with various experiences and had enjoyed them a great deal. Combined with her education and work experience, she believed that she was well prepared to continue her career as a teacher.

In this respect, April's background experience was somewhat different from that of Sarah and Lynette. While she did have some experience with Aboriginal culture from her family background and childhood experience, her

cruise line teaching job was quite different from the other two participants. This experience was helpful to her in many ways. Not only did she have the opportunity to meet people from different cultures but it also helped her to develop a more global view. On the cruise line April had learned some basic vocabulary working with different language groups such as those from Turkish, Caribbean, and Spanish families. April had students from Mexico in her classroom, and she found that being able to speak a few words in Spanish was helpful. However she had not previously met any Somali families, and she had several Somali students in her class. April had to learn about her Somali students and how to best understand and teach them.

April worked for a private academy as a kindergarten teacher for 1 year. She reported that she had worked with some but not many ELLs at the private school. After completing this job she became a substitute teacher for a large urban public school board and later she took a full-time position at Findlay School. When April was offered the job at Findlay School the principal told her that the school had a high population of ELLs. She was comfortable in accepting the position and thought that she was up to the challenge of teaching them. April believed that her earlier experience in life and her exposure to different cultures and language groups during her time working with the cruise line would serve her well in her new position.

I grew up on a reservation or near a reservation . . . I worked on a cruise
line too and so I had kids from all over the world not speaking English and

not even in a group setting before, so you know . . . I didn't realize how different it [teaching ELLs in a mainstream classroom] would be though. (T3A INT 1, May 2011)

April found that her experiences were not sufficient to help her in her classroom at Findlay School. She reported that during her university education she did not take any courses in language acquisition or linguistics, or for that matter, any courses related to teaching ELLs. When I asked if April would be receptive to taking additional courses to enhance her pedagogy related to ELLs, she said she thought that would be valuable.

After arriving at Findlay School, April realized that there were a lot more ELLs to teach than she had expected. It was going to be a different experience from her previous jobs because she was teaching so many students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in one class and having students at different levels of proficiency in English.

Yeah, I just realized I have to be very careful and ask a lot of questions and not just assume things all the time. Not assume they will do this or like something, there's all kinds of little things that every now and then that come up, and you just have to kind of be aware of that and then change things if you need to for them or work around it. (T3A INT 2, May 2011)

April realized that she could not take things for granted. She was sensitive enough to note that she had to be careful what information she was gathering from students because she might make assumptions that were essentially not correct.

April's pedagogical approach.

April was very structured in her approach to teaching. She respected her students and she was very accommodating in making sure they were attentive and ready to learn when she was teaching. April enhanced the relevance of the learning experience by using the background knowledge of her students to support learning in her class. Sometimes using English for explanation purposes was a challenge for her students to express themselves. April believed that her role was to teach all students. She thought that she was responsible for providing ways for ELLs to learn as best they could, just as she would for any other student in her class. April's previous experience teaching on the cruise line was an asset in appreciating the diversity of her class. During my observations April demonstrated a positive attitude towards her students.

> You give them some positive reinforcement, you know you talk about the
> growth they've had, you just have to be super positive about everything
> and not overwhelm them either, give them activities they can handle
> because if you are giving them something that is way over their heads they
> are going to get stressed out and not be happy. (T3A INT 6, June 2011)

This was clearly illustrated in the way April approached and interacted with her students. She wanted them to feel comfortable, to be part of the

community of learners in her classroom, and most importantly to be successful in their new environment. April believed that encouraging her students to achieve to their full potential was important.

> Just to do their best, and to do well, and to succeed, and the social skills too and I'm trying to teach them, and to be respectful of each other. (T3A INT 5, June 2011)

Organizing for instruction, differentiating programs for students, and selecting appropriate learning groups were especially important to April because she believed that if they did not have material at their level they would become frustrated or lose interest when learning content material. For example she particularly liked hands-on type activities which she found meaningful for both native English speakers and ELLs. Her reason for this was her belief that Aboriginal students learned best this way and she found hands-on approaches useful. April's expectation was to engage all students in the learning process. This involved partner and group work so students could engage in social interaction and peer collaboration. April thought that ELLs could learn from more capable peers, for example developing their English language and vocabulary skills.

Parental involvement in the classroom was another way that April tried to include the culture of ELLs in the curriculum. April said that she made every attempt to do this but the language barrier as well as cultural barriers were issues that she had no control over. Some the parents made an attempt to practice

speaking English but they needed to be more consistent in order to best help their children. She noted that if two students in her class spoke a similar language and they did not understand instructions or had difficulty with conceptual understanding, she encouraged them to use their first language to help each other. However, April indicated that she did not see this happening in her class on a regular basis. In discussion with April I found that she did not know much about language acquisition and she was not aware that being well versed in a first language helped with learning a second language.

April was aware that she needed to modify her own speech in order to make it easier to communicate with the parents of ELLs.

> One thing that really helped me was learning to talk to ELL parents . . . just slowing down your speech and just kind of so that they can follow you. Something I definitely learned on the ship was that . . . when you talk to ELLs you can't talk super fast. If you slow down they can actually understand you better because they're not too good with the English. (T3A INT 4, June 2011)

April did not have many parents to assist her in the classroom or on field trips. In contrast she said that in the Chinese bilingual program at her school there were more parent volunteers. This may be because the teachers in that program were Chinese and parents could easily communicate with them. In the Chinese program there were more supports but parents paid for some of them, such as receiving further instruction in Chinese language.

Summary

The participants each had varied experiences in teaching. Sarah taught Grade 2 in an elementary/junior high school with a large number of students from Somalia, some of whom were refugees. She had a variety of teaching experiences including part-time, full-time, and substitute teaching spanning some 19 years. Her initial teaching experience with ELLs began when she was a substitute teacher 9 years earlier. She enjoyed her role in sparking the interest of her students in learning. She gave the impression of being a reflective individual.

Lynette was a veteran teacher of Ukrainian background who spoke both Ukrainian and English. She had been teaching for 20 years. Lynette worked on a reserve during the early years of her teaching career. She relied heavily on her personal practical knowledge in developing her understanding of teaching diverse groups of students in her classroom. She did not embrace the use of theory in teaching, yet she wanted to have a consultant share some theory with her in order to gain background knowledge that could enhance her pedagogy.

April was a novice teacher who had taught for 3 years in a Grade 3 classroom. She was of Ukrainian and Aboriginal cultural backgrounds. April was a world traveler who gained experience with working in the inner city and on a cruise line where she encountered different cultures. Even though she worked with relatively privileged groups of children on the cruise line it did provide her with some understandings of diversity in regard to teaching in her classroom.

Each participant had a different approach to teaching that reflected their personal experiences and which they translated into their pedagogy. The three participating teachers claimed not to have any particular theoretical frame for their teaching but relied on past experience as a foundation for their teaching practice. They relied on their own insights that were derived from classroom observations of their students and then they employed a variety of pedagogical strategies in response. These strategies included the use of gestures, drawing, peer collaboration, social interaction, and engaging in talk. A trial and error approach to teaching was characteristic of two of the three participating teachers.

Chapter Six: Findings of the Study

During the analysis of the data a number of themes were identified in relation to the questions guiding this study. These themes were grouped into three main areas. The first of these addresses the challenges the teachers faced in teaching diverse students in mainstream classrooms. The second consists of the instructional approaches the teachers used to support the ELLs in experiencing success in their classrooms, and the third consists of the supports the participating teachers believe was necessary to teach ELLs effectively. I present these three groups of themes under the following headings:

- challenges faced by the teachers

- instructional approaches used by the teachers

- supports teachers identified as necessary for teaching ELLs.

Challenges Faced by the Teachers

It became clear through interviews and observations during the course of this study that the participating teachers were well prepared to teach in general mainstream classrooms. However, they were not well prepared to teach English language learners, which is not entirely surprising since they had no formal teacher education in this area. The following themes in the challenges faced by the teachers were identified.

Understanding students' background experiences.

The participating teachers faced a diverse population of students with a wide range of background (life) experiences, some of which were traumatic.

They believed it was important to learn about the background of ELLs in their classroom in order to program and teach them effectively. Sarah commented:

> One of the things was that a lot of these kids had been through trauma, either because they were hungry and didn't know where their next meal was coming from, or just having been uprooted from their homeland to another land because they could not live there anymore and their lives were threatened. They had a lot of trauma issues. So I had to learn to work with students who had trauma issues. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

This comment illustrates a common experience identified by the participating teachers: their need for more background information on the ELLs in their classrooms. They believed that this information was important if they were to provide appropriate instruction to help ELLs be successful at school. In all three classrooms one of the ways the teachers tried to obtain information was through hearing ELLs' stories. They were intrigued by the stories the students shared about their experience, and from these stories the teachers were able to develop some understanding of their backgrounds. However, the teachers also noted that ELLs were reluctant to share their personal stories, possibly in some cases because they did not want to relive negative experiences and/or because they wanted to move forward in their own lives. Although the teachers found that they gathered valuable information through these stories, the stories alone did not provide sufficient background information.

Sarah believed that a viable way to start a topic of study was with stories from her students that incorporated common background experiences. She used the shared experiences of students as a focus to link their experiences with the curriculum (Moran, Tinajero, Stobee, & Tinajero, 1993). For example, during her social studies class when discussing and learning about different communities, Sarah encouraged students to share their background knowledge and experiences of moving from one country to another. She said:

it was interesting because a lot of what we talked about was journeys and experiences that we'd had coming to Canada, what that was like, what it was like to leave where they had come from and how that felt. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

The participating teachers were aware that ELLs can face a range of problems adapting to their new culture and mainstream classroom. For example, one of the students from April's class was from a refugee camp and had just arrived from Egypt. He was born in Somalia but his family had moved to Egypt as refugees. They chose Egypt because of the Muslim religion. Unfortunately they encountered problems in Egypt because there were child kidnappers and they had to move again. Another refugee student in April's class had experienced mental trauma but this particular student was not able to articulate her story.

she hasn't said anything . . . She's got some kind of speech problem and she hasn't been able to go to speech [therapy] yet because she has to be here for 2 years, right. She has got some speech problems and she knows

she's not saying things properly and that people don't understand her. So

she's kind of shy in what she says. (T3A INT 6, June 2011)

This student was not able to speak English well. She had a speech problem and

was therefore unwilling to talk in class, and her prior experiences may have been

so traumatic that she did not want to relive or share them. The reluctance to share

personal stories was not unique to this student. Such reluctance created a problem

for April because she was not able to obtain the information she needed to teach

students who were faced with multiple needs. "They've got issues, they have got

things on their minds. They are probably withdrawn" (T3A INT 6, June 2011).

During my observations in Sarah's class I noticed that she had to remind

the students often to listen attentively when she was teaching. She said:

It's challenging . . . to keep them [ELLs] quiet, and it's doubly challenging

because they come from a culture where that's not an expectation because

everybody talks at the same time and everybody talks loud. So it's

extremely challenging. (T1S INT 6, May 2011)

The teachers also noted that students who were in a culturally homogenous group

would develop their own behavior patterns and could become oblivious to

expected behavior patterns within the school environment.

Modifications to the curriculum were needed to address the particular

linguistic and cultural needs of the ELLs, which the teachers recognized as being

critical in order to make learning comprehensible. The participating teachers

thought that they had not been adequately prepared to make such modifications,

either in their pre-service teacher education program or during in-service sessions.

There is a demonstrated need for pre-service programs to provide approaches to

this issue so that teachers can adapt to the particular needs of each individual class

of students they encounter. The importance of teachers learning about the

backgrounds of ELLs and integrating this knowledge into the curriculum is

reinforced in the research literature (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Freeman &

Freeman, 2003; Gay, 2002; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008;

Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Weisman & Hansen,

2007). Banks et al. (2001, 2005) contend that teachers need to develop a broad

knowledge base with respect to subject matter and content in order to include and

accommodate the prior experiences of students from different linguistic and

cultural backgrounds. Ladson-Billings (2001b) also emphasized that teachers

should know the content and "also need to know their students and know how

their students learn" (p. 75).

Weisman and Hansen (2007) pointed out that "teachers who learn as much

as possible about their students will be better able to tap into this background

knowledge to facilitate understanding" (p. 181). This also provides motivation

for students to learn (Abril, 2003).

Understanding students' cultural background.

The participating teachers in this study were very aware of their need for

relevant information about the varying cultures and traditions of the ELLs they

taught. They faced a diverse population of students with a wide range of cultural

backgrounds. Sarah noted that using cultural background knowledge was necessary to help students develop their understanding of the concept of communities and how they were similar yet different.

My observation was that the participating teachers used whatever previous experience they had with other cultural groups to assist them to understand their ELLs. For example, Lynette's previous experience living and teaching on a reserve provided her with firsthand experience of Aboriginal culture. This had given her some cultural sensitivity. She noted that learning about Aboriginal cultures prepared her to understand and appreciate the cultures of her other students. Lynette was willing to learn about different cultures and she wanted to make sure that she was not being disrespectful to the students:

> Well it just makes me more open to making sure that I understand where
> they're coming from. If I asked them a certain thing maybe in their
> culture it is not acceptable, like for instance the native culture they don't
> look at you eye to eye so if they're looking down that's a sign actually of
> respect and so I have to actually get to know most of these cultures, what's
> behind [these cultures] so that when I meet their parents I will have a little
> bit of understanding on where my role fits in their child's life. (T2L INT
> 1, April 2011)

For April, awareness of the importance of including ELLs' backgrounds and cultural experiences in teaching grew out of her own family heritage which included both Aboriginal and Ukrainian cultures. April remembered some of the

customs her family celebrated, and appreciated how the prior cultural experience of ELLs could be used to bring them into the social fabric of the classroom. April reported:

> This year we have got Tunisia [in the curriculum], and a lot of them can relate to Tunisia and so that's an easy one to do, to the Somalis. Then we've got Peru and I have some Spanish children in my class, and they can kind of relate to some of Spanish culture so kind of it actually helps you know . . . One of the [Somali] ladies came in and they gave the henna which they do in Tunisia as well, which is a Somali custom so it's kind of neat and it actually makes it a little bit easier teaching social sometimes because they can relate and the kids can tell stories from these different countries. (T3A INT 4, June 2011)

In this comment, April recognized the importance of the integration of culture in teaching. This provides an avenue for including ELLs in activities and discussion in mainstream classrooms. When teachers acknowledge their students' cultures they are acting in their students' best interest to "truly engage all students in learning both in school and beyond" (Villegas & Lucas, 2007, p. 33).

Nevertheless, the prior personal and professional experiences of the participating teachers were only of partial value to them in addressing many of the challenges they encountered in their classrooms. The teachers found they were faced with much more diversity in their classrooms than they were prepared for through their prior experiences. Therefore, they found that despite their personal

backgrounds, they had difficulty understanding and integrating all the cultural perspectives of ELLs in their classrooms.

There were few resources available to inform the teachers about different cultures or about the approaches they could use in teaching ELLs in a diverse classroom. April said:

> It would be neat to have a presentation from some people from the
> community telling us about their culture, explaining what is a hijab for,
> why are they [the students] music exempt, what kind of foods they eat,
> why they can't eat pork, like all that because a lot of the time we don't
> even know, so having somebody come in and just tell us about their
> culture . . . what kind of teaching do they have in their country, what was
> it like there, how do they learn. (T3A INT 2, May 2011)

Lynette expressed her need for more information about ELLs in the following way:

> I need more understanding on basically the backgrounds and where these
> children are coming from before I can start teaching them . . . Without my
> experience I would be really lost. But because I have had over 25 years'
> experience I know that this group of people believe in this particular belief
> system and if you don't as a new teacher coming and teaching ESL and if
> you don't know these belief systems I think you are in trouble. (T2L INT
> 2, April 2011)

Freeman and Freeman (2003) pointed out that, "students' cultural backgrounds influence how they interact with texts" (p. 8). Using culturally relevant material in helping ELLs with their literacy skills can enhance their academic ability. It is noted in the research literature that learning is more meaningful for students who engage in reading culturally relevant texts that connect with their background experiences (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Freeman & Freeman, 2003).

Language use in cultural context.

In terms of the teachers' own abilities to speak additional languages, April had a partial understanding of Ukrainian, and Lynette had spoken Ukrainian at home as a child and had learnt some Cree while working in the north. Sarah did not speak a second language. April's and Lynette's knowledge of a second language gave them at least a partial understanding of the window that language can provide into another culture. Through this they were able to recognize to some degree the challenges that ELLs face in their new culture, and appreciate their difficulties when trying to converse in English. Lynette especially could understand this because of her experience moving to teach on a reserve but not being able to speak Cree.

According to Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002) "language is a critical key to understanding the culture and experience of others" (p. 50). The teachers were aware that the way language is used in one culture may be different in another. This can lead to misunderstandings on the part of teachers when faced with students from different cultures. In some cultures, it is impolite for a student

to talk in class and therefore a student may appear not to know the answer to a question when in fact they are just following cultural norms (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Horowitz et al., 2005). Another example is that some children are from cultures where they only answer questions to which it is clear that the questioner does not know the answer. Therefore, in a classroom situation, when a teacher may ask an obvious question to make a point, such students will not reply and may appear to be ignorant of the correct answer (Horowitz et al., 2005).

Heath (1983) also found that children responded differently to questions based upon their cultural background. Her study of children in the communities of Trackton and Roadville in the U. S. is interesting because the students were from the same local area and yet they used language differently and responded to questions in school differently. In brief, students from the town of Trackton, a Black working-class community, were not used to being asked questions and especially questions their teachers posed to them requiring them to display knowledge. The only questions they were used to receiving were those to which the questioner did not know the answer. In contrast, students from Roadville, a White middle-class community, were used to the types of questions their teachers posed and therefore appeared to be performing better in academic exchanges. The relevance to my study is that if such great differences can exist between two groups of students in one local English-speaking area of the U. S. how much greater are the differences in a classroom with many students from different cultures and countries far removed from one another?

Brown Street School celebrated a culture day during which students were invited to wear their traditional clothes and bring traditional foods to school. Lynette thought this was a great opportunity for parents to participate and get to know her on a more personal basis.

> They bring in their own foods and I bring in Canadian foods and then it's such a nice time because we talk over food and we talk about their culture and they learn about Canadian culture, I learn about their culture and it's a mutual respect and then that's how I get them into my school and into our classrooms. (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

While this example is one way to embrace the cultures of ELLs it is not sufficient to fully understand the scope and the challenges ELLs face in a school and living in Canada.

The participating teachers found that one particular group of students had unexpected difficulty. These were students born in Canada whose parents had recently immigrated and who spoke a language other than English. Parents and teachers alike assumed that these students were fluent in English. The parents believed that they would absorb English naturally and would speak only their native language at home. Students were exposed to only their first language at home and when they came to school they were faced with learning English. This was challenging for some ELLs and it was difficult to understand them because they were using words in their first language interchangeably with English words. Lynette noted:

Because at home during their growing up years they are spoken to in their

own language, they're not spoken to in the English language because some

of the parents sometimes I feel that they believe "Oh, we are living in

Canada and they'll just absorb English. I want my culture and my

language to survive in my child and so I'm going to make sure to speak

my language to them." So when they get to kindergarten they are at just

as much a disadvantage as the ones that are foreign born . . . So I find that

sometimes it's more difficult because at least the other child, if they learn

their language well, they can transfer that language into the English

language but if they are getting two or three languages at home, English,

some Spanish or whatever, they come and they don't have a full solid base

of a language to develop on. (T2L INT 2, April 2011)

Many of these students entered school not being fluent in either the first language

of their parents or English. Roessingh and Kover (2002) note that ESL students

from this background are at a high risk for academic failure. The reason for this

is that they do not have a good grounding in their first language and as a result do

not develop their second language either. Consequently "the impoverished levels

of both L1 and L2 means . . . the higher order thinking skills . . . are left under

developed. And sounding good only compounds their problems in school"

(Roessingh & Kover, 2003, pp. 6–7).

Transitioning into a new school environment can be problematic for

children integrating into the Canadian school setting. Some children may have

had the opportunity to go to school in their home country while others have not.

The reluctance of some ELLs to participate in classroom activities can be

attributed to the respect for and fear of teachers held in some cultures, as well as a

cultural bias that the group takes priority over the needs of the individual.

Therefore some ELLs will not ask questions because they are afraid of holding

back others in the class (Yau, 1995). The research literature reflects the

reluctance of some ELLs to engage in classroom discussions because they come

from societies in which teachers are believed to hold knowledge and students are

to receive it. This is why they are often reluctant to express opinions or engage in

conversations. Refugee students in particular may have been in school but may

have had their education disrupted one or many times during their migration.

These students lack learning skills and often have to start from scratch, thereby

having more challenges than other students (Yau, 1995).

Barriers to school home connections.

The participating teachers believed that there was a benefit to be gained by

having a close link between the home and the school. In particular, they wanted

parental involvement in the classroom for a diverse set of purposes, including

helping with classroom activities, helping supervise field trips, interpreting, and

aiding one-on-one instruction. Sarah, Lynette, and April all tried to encourage

parents to volunteer in their classrooms. In Sarah's case she had occasional

volunteers. Lynette tried to connect with parents but met many roadblocks along

the way. April had similar experiences where it was difficult for her to get parent

volunteers due to linguistic and cultural barriers. She said:

> In my class I get very few, it's a struggle to get volunteers for even field
>
> trips and things. A lot of them can't read or write even for the field trips
>
> they can't come because the parents are intimidated because they can't
>
> read, they can't write, they can't speak English either so they don't want
>
> to come. (T3A INT 2, May 2011)

April's school did have one particular Somali volunteer, but unfortunately, this

individual did not volunteer in April's classroom. "He is a bit of a role model.

He's university educated, but that is just one person. I think he just volunteers

and helps one-on-one working with the kids" (T3A INT 6, June 2011).

The teachers believed they tried their best to connect with parents in

assisting their children with school work. In this situation it was not the teachers

who were restricting the parents from participating in school, but parents' cultural

barriers and perceptions of their connection with the school. Many parents were

not comfortable participating in school activities and helping their children.

Lynette and April stated that parents belonging to ethnic groups that were

primarily Muslim, for example the Somali families, experienced cultural barriers

because the male parent often held a dominant position. This may make it more

difficult for mothers to participate in school activities. It requires an

understanding on the teacher's part that cultural barriers can be difficult to break

through and must be taken into consideration when dealing with the students and

their families. The dilemma for the teachers is how to overcome these barriers to involve parents in school activities. Lynette mentioned that she tried on several occasions to get parents involved in her classroom. She said:

> I try my best to make them feel comfortable in the school. They will stay away because they are shy or uncomfortable or they're not familiar . . . I have a little bit of a feeling why they're not coming. I don't take it personally. I know that they're coming from a place where they don't know Canadian culture and you know they are learning just as well as I am learning. (T2L INT 4, May 2011)

Lynette also tried to connect with parents through home visits. The parents were not used to having teachers visit their homes and were not receptive to the idea. Lynette said:

> The problem was I would phone and I would make an appointment and they wouldn't be there or they wouldn't answer the door all of a sudden, or they would feel embarrassed or they don't really know the culture and so forth and then it's also the other way around when I've actually invited them to the school and that same thing, problem, is they don't feel comfortable here, they don't feel they belong, so it's very hard both ways. (T2L INT 4, May 2011)

This account demonstrates that an understanding of culture is critical.

All the participating teachers believed that there was a great reluctance on the part of the parents of ELLs to become involved either with the school or in the

classroom. Furthermore, on the few occasions in which ELL parents did volunteer, the experiences reported by the teachers were that parents had some difficulty understanding directions. Sarah said.

> I had an assignment for the kids to write a postcard from where we've been studying in social studies to try and get across what they had learned about that place and I gave one student per supervisor from their culture and they totally misinterpreted the assignment and they wrote it from what it was like in Somalia rather that what is was like in Iqualuit or wherever we were studying and so they totally misunderstood . . . as much as I would like to use them more they need to have higher level literacy skills than the children do and often they are either the same or below where the children are and it is hard to use them. (T1S INT 6, May 2011)

Sarah proposed some causes for the parents' reluctance to participate in school:

> many of them come from a culture where they are illiterate to start with and they see school totally separate from themselves, they don't see that, they think that children when they are in school are the responsibility of teachers and the principals etc. and they don't have any responsibility towards their child once they are in the school and so it's educating them how to work with the school as parents and become involved. (T1S INT 6, May 2011).

Other causes suggested by the teachers included a lack of English language skills on the part of parents, a reluctance to become involved with the school system,

and a lack of confidence in approaching school personnel (i.e., teachers and administrators). These issues are important and it is necessary to determine how to facilitate a closer relationship among teachers, ELLs, their parents, and the school.

Although not overtly stated, the reaction of the participating teachers to the apparent lack of parent involvement in school suggested that they interpreted this lack of involvement as a cultural deficit. If the participating teachers had a greater degree of cultural background knowledge they might have been able to develop ways by which the students' families could be brought into the learning environment of the classroom as resources in support of teaching that would have been more meaningful.

Schools are faced with high ELL populations and the challenge of communicating with a wide variety of non-English speaking parents is great. Many ELL parents have not completed high school in their native country and have little formal education compared to Canadian-born parents. Sarah found that she had a wide range of native languages in her class and could not get enough parents who spoke English well enough to translate all the different languages when she was conversing with the parents. This created some of the problems that she had with parents volunteering in the classroom and not understanding what she wanted them to do.

A challenge encountered by Lynette was that the parents of some ELLs in her class were reluctant to undertake the necessary background check for

volunteering. They were very suspicious of authorities and were reluctant to sign a document allowing a background check when they didn't understand why it was needed. Issues faced by parents such as lack of English and lack of confidence and ability to communicate with teachers, educational deficits, disconnection between home and school, and logistical issues such as getting time off work or child care to come to the school, are consistent with those identified in the research literature (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Banks et al., 2005; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Pena, 2000).

The first category of such issues was that, while homework in the elementary grades is minimal, work sent home from the classroom with the students was rarely completed. For example April found that the parents of ELLs in her class were not able to assist with homework because they had such large families that they did not have time to work with individual children. She said:

> I mean the parents can't help their kids. I don't know what it is, I know that some of these families are so, so large I just really think that the mothers can't even get to the homework and they can't even sit there with them to do it and so the kid is off on their own doing it and some kids just need structure, they need somebody there sitting with them to do it. They don't have it. (T3A INT 6, June 2011)

An additional factor was that parents of ELLs were generally not proficient enough in English to help their children learn it and they were also not able to assist their children with homework.

The second category was an after-school programming issue. Claverly and Brown Street Schools provided an after-school program during which students could do their homework if they wished and Sarah and Lynette found that ELLs benefited from the after-school homework programs. Findlay School did not provide such a program. Claverly School also provided an opportunity to develop parental language skills so that parents could help their children at home. The school organized meetings once a month in which parents were taught how to read with their children using pictures to help understand the story, as well as how to ask questions about what is happening in a story. The intention was to enable parents to support their children thereby helping their children learn, and furthering home school connections. Sarah thought that this program was useful to some degree in helping parents with English.

> afterschool programming that is funded by community groups that get government funding . . . there are a variety of different things happening, some of them are sports related, some of them are academic related, some of them are culturally related. One program is for ELLs in particular and they need to have a snack after school and then they divide into groups in which they are doing a craft or something or doing homework, typically focused on math or reading or whatever. They also have gym time when they play games together and so there is a socializing piece as well. (T1S INT 6, May 2011)

The third category of issues is that extra work was asked for by some of the parents who wanted to be involved in helping their children at home with their school work. April encouraged this but there were some disadvantages: parents with large families were not able to spend the extra time with their child, some parents did not have the necessary language skills. and other parents wanted extra work but they did not have the skills they needed to help their children.

Refugee children.

One of the striking things to come out of my discussions with the participants was that students with a refugee background formed a distinct group within the ELL population. Some of these students come from war zones, areas of civil unrest, or lawless areas. The teachers perceived that refugee children have different needs from ELLs who have not been refugees. This was particularly true in Sarah's class where school was not a familiar environment for many of the ELLs and so following school procedure was new to them. Sarah thought it was ironic that one year when she had responsibility for teaching a group of refugee students, many of whom had left their home countries and crowded refugee camps, they arrived in Canada only to find themselves taking classes in a small storage area with no windows. There was no other classroom space available for them. The storage room created some unusual anxiety for the students. Sarah reflected on one of the most troubling experiences she had while working with this group of students. Claverly School had procedures and protocols for practice lockdown drills for the safety of students. One day a

lockdown drill was held while Sarah was teaching in the storage room. In such a procedure, the lights had to be turned off and the door had to be locked when the students and teacher were in the room. Sarah said that this experience was traumatic for the refugee students.

> that was a disaster. These children were terrified, and when, of course somebody comes around and knocks on the door to see like just to kind of see what you'll do. They absolutely went berserk, they just went crazy . . . we actually had to bring in a psychologist or a social worker to work with us and to work that whole thing through. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

After the lockdown exercise, Sarah had to take the students outside to get some fresh air for part of the day. When they returned to the classroom Sarah debriefed the lock down exercise with the students by discussing the best way to handle the situation if it were to happen again in the future. The students and Sarah decided that in future she would put a piece of cardboard to cover the window on the door to the storage room. She would leave the lights on and they would sit quietly in their chairs because they felt safer this way. At a later time during the year, the school had another lockdown drill and the plan that Sarah and the students had decided upon worked well and really helped to put their minds at ease.

The students' behaviour in this particular situation was due to their prior experiences as victims who had experienced trauma. Many of them had been in life-threatening situations and the drill brought this reality back to them. They

were reliving their experiences during the lockdown drill. A program that was designed by the school board with the best intention of protecting students during a crisis actually threw these students into a panic. This situation demonstrates the need to be aware that there may be special adaptations needed when students are integrating in a new environment when they have lived previously in areas of unrest. The school did not take this into consideration and it was up to Sarah to raise the issue for others to be informed.

Sarah offered other examples of the differences between refugee students and other ELLs. For example, for social reasons related to being a refugee, many of them had never been to school before arriving in Canada. The culture of school in Canada was quite different for refugee students from any previous experiences that they had. They lacked experience in the routines required in a structured learning environment. In addition they had not learned to attend to detail in learning. Sarah found that she spent a lot of time teaching the students to adapt to the school environment and learn the social skills that would enable them to more easily integrate into the new culture.

> I never in all my days thought it would be so hard to teach a child to sit down in a desk when they came into a room but it took months to do that. The children have a lot more freedom to make their own choices and they come from situations where they are very much in survival mode so they're very aggressive . . . there are certain things that they will need to do in order to survive in our culture so they have to be taught, because

they don't know, so you have to be very firm about, and very clear and firm and simple about what the rules are. You have to stand behind them constantly because they will continuously try to challenge them because they're just used to doing their own thing. (T1S INT 3, April 2011)

Difficult moments in teaching and learning were often related to the behaviour of some of the children who weren't used to school routines or Canadian culture. Lynette shared an especially challenging experience with a refugee student who had lived in a refugee camp. The father of this particular student insisted that his child was not used to sitting in a classroom and should be allowed to move around the classroom at any time.

the dad would come to me, . . . and he would say "You don't understand our culture, you have to let my child run around the school, you don't understand that this is where he's come from so to make him stay in a classroom in a small 8 x 10 room all day long is unacceptable here, you have to realize he has to run. This is part of his education, this is our culture, we have to learn how to, he has to express himself and if he is stuck listening to you all day he is not able to enjoy life or interact with nature and it's impossible" . . . 6 hours, that was too long for him to stay in school, like, you know, he should be able to come home whenever he feels like coming home and . . . my classroom was too structured for his child to learn. (T2L INT 2, April 2011)

The teachers found that their understanding of the refugee students in their classrooms, in particular, was limited because they did not have first hand information on how to deal with these students and they did not know about the students' experiences prior to coming to Canada. Lynette recounted:

Last year there was a parent that happened to be absolutely difficult. He [student] came from Somalia, he was trained in the bush on a school that was open so they could come and go as they pleased whenever they felt like going. So when this child came to Canada he didn't know how to sit in the seat, he ran around the room, he ran around the school, he threw pencils, he threw paper, he threw books, he lay, did temper tantrums. So every day after school I had to say [to the father], unfortunately this is the way, this is what happened. I recorded it, can you help me? What can I do? Is there something I can do to help me do my job so that after a while he will learn? I got quite a not good reception: I'm a woman, I have no right to talk about his son, his son has more rights than I did because I'm a woman. So I had to teach them that in Canada I'm trained as a teacher and I do have the right to stop your child from disrupting others and he didn't find it to be a disruption, his child. I was called basically racist, … I didn't understand their culture, that they should be able to run around and you're forcing him into a chair and that's against their culture and against who they are and it was not very pleasant. (T2L INT 6, May 2011)

Lynette commented during the interviews that she could not imagine what it would be like to live in a country where there was unrest and political upheaval and, for that matter, she could not imagine living in a refugee camp. The participating teachers were sensitive to the needs of the refugee students and other ELLs in their classrooms and they sought to help them by developing a relationship with them based on trust and understanding. Refugee students do have particular difficulty in school but, as detailed by Yau (1995), they generally enjoy the school environment and their problems in school are actually more a reflection of the challenges they face outside the school environment than they are challenges within the school. In other words, the most difficult challenges faced by refugee students are related to their social situation in general and not to the school environment.

Yau (1995) emphasized that it is important for teachers to have some knowledge of refugee students' histories and their present experiences outside the school. The findings of Yau's (1995) study are consistent with the observations of the participating teachers in this study. ESL students with maladaptive behaviours are more likely to have had minimal schooling and therefore had not become familiar with classroom routines or developed the concentration skills that they need for school work. Lynette in particular had experienced and noted maladaptive behaviours in some of her students due to lack of prior exposure to school.

Time as a challenge.

Time was identified by the participating teachers as being a limiting factor to prepare lessons, participate in taking in-services, and working with other teachers. Lynette in particular expressed concern about the amount of time it took to prepare her language arts lessons. She noted that because of the large number of ELLs with a broad range of language competencies in her class she actually had to plan five levels of lessons under each lesson plan.

> It takes a lot of time. For instance, in language arts, lesson plans can be about three pages long just because I have to make sure that each child is getting success in this and progressing at the same time. I feel very happy when I am able to meet those needs over a period of time but then there are some times where the child is not progressing and then I have to look what other kinds of methods can I use and what other kinds of strategies can I use so that the child can grow? (T2L INT 1, April 2011)

April also indicated that it took a great deal of time to prepare lessons because of the different levels of abilities in her class.

Lynette claimed that time for preparing lessons made it difficult for her to take in-services. Lynette noted that she had family obligations and there was a limit to the amount of time she was willing to spend out of the classroom preparing lessons and educating herself. She stated that access to help from a consultant would help her to plan more effectively. In this way she would have time to attend in-services to deepen her understanding of teaching ELLs, and time

would not be seen as a barrier. The other two participants also cited time as a factor affecting their lesson preparation but were not as explicit as Lynette.

Overall, the teachers thought that they were caught up in the web of time, pushed to get students to a certain point in the curriculum and to cover the necessary objectives outlined in the program of study. They believed this time constraint may have repercussions for ELLs later as they may not fully understand what they are learning. The pace of instruction for ELLs may be too fast for them to grasp the concepts being presented to them. This finding is consistent with results obtained in a study conducted by Gándara, Maxell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005).

Instructional Approaches Used by the Teachers

Teachers' intrinsic/practical knowledge.

The participating teachers employed strategies that they thought would be useful in teaching both native speakers and ELLs. Some of these strategies were developed from their previous teacher education program, personal experiences, and professional development. While these strategies are useful for teaching all students it is important for teachers to keep abreast of best practices strategies that would enhance the educational progress of ELLs.

Teachers usually have some intrinsic beliefs that have been formed through their individual experiences, instructional histories, and how they think about teaching in general. Very often experiences as a student in K-12 schooling have forged a teacher's basic beliefs about and approach to teaching (Kagan,

1992). As teachers enter the reality of teaching they are faced with the challenges of making decisions about their pedagogy. The process of decision-making is ongoing and it is critical for teachers to reflect on their own practice. The three teachers participating in this study held beliefs about teaching ELLs that were based on their prior experiences (Fang, 1996). Their beliefs about teaching led them to the approaches they gained through their experiences in their classrooms.

The participating teachers indicated that they did not have any particular theoretical framework for their teaching of ELLs. In fact, they generally expressed a disinterest in theory and relied on what they thought was practical knowledge. In particular Lynette was very vocal about not using any theoretical basis for her pedagogy. For example when Lynette was comparing her practical experience teaching and living on a reserve with an in-service that she had taken on native culture, she stated:

> Yes, absolutely, I actually lived on the reserve, I actually was immersed in their culture. I lived right beside them. I learned their habits, their disciplining of their children, their culture, their language, how they interact with one another and that gave me a heads up more than somebody who has read a bunch of theories about what to do. When you're actually living in that culture I think it gives you a lot more insight than somebody who has just done a lot of theory work. (T2L INT 3, April 2011)

Lynette exemplified this attitude, having a skeptical view about the value of theory in relation to practice. Lynette saw only practical knowledge as having any benefit to her teaching.

> I think theory is great, but you need to actually put it into practice. Once you put that theory into practice and you actually realize it doesn't work then I don't know what they're based on . . . these are children, these are individual people and you can't place a whole group of people into one theory and say "OK, there it works, try it out." What I found is yes, some of the theory does work for some students but some theories don't work for some students, so to just put it into a blanket and say "Here you go, use this it will work," it doesn't work. (T2L INT 2, April 2011)

The other two participants, Sarah and April, also expressed similar thinking. During my interviews I gained the impression that the teachers did not fully realize the important part theory played in developing effective practice. Lynette provided a typical response that illustrated her preconceived ideas about the term "theory":

> L: I have attended theory classes where basically a lot of theory [was taught] but theory doesn't really help me in the classroom
>
> J.N.: OK. So what theory are you talking about?
>
> L: Like theory is when is the best time for a child to learn a language? When do you know if there is more than just ELL problems? Is there a learning disability or is it ELL? When do you stop saying "You know

what, this is no longer an ELL problem, this is something else for the child?" It's useful but it still doesn't come down to the actual lesson planning. What I've been doing the last 4 years is just getting a big tub and putting everything that I can think of into that tub for my ELL students. (T2 INT 1, April 2011)

And again later:

J.N.: What type of theory did you use?

L: Well, I can't remember right off the top of my head because it failed on me so I discarded it because it didn't work. I used about four or five different theories. They said do this, this and this and this will work. So I practiced them. This is about 3 years ago where I took some ELL training. (T2L INT 2, April 2011)

Rather than working from a theoretical perspective Sarah and Lynette both employed strategies they used previously to teach ELLs and through their observation they made decisions about how useful they were through a process of trial and error.

The concept of scaffolding[16] emerged from this study as an example of the disconnect that existed between theoretical understanding and the pedagogy of the participating teachers. Scaffolding is a concept that all three teachers had encountered in their Balanced Literacy Program. They all believed they had implemented scaffolding in their pedagogy. However, I observed that all three

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[16] Scaffolding has been defined in Chapter two.

had only a rudimentary understanding of scaffolding. For example, Sarah's understanding of this concept was mainly that it built confidence for students in the learning process. She perceived scaffolding as providing assistance to students in performing a task.

> It is a support, it builds confidence. It makes them feel they are learning the language fast because . . . it internalized something, it internalizes language patterns, it internalizes vocabulary and builds confidence. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

I found that the participating teachers did not fully understand the pedagogical nature of scaffolding and I believe that they did not follow through sufficiently to allow their students to demonstrate their learning when the scaffold was removed. After teacher intervention, some of the students were able to perform the required task but others needed continuous support, a situation that did not lead them to independent work. The goal of scaffolding is for students to develop a higher level of performance on a particular task, enabling them to go beyond what they are currently able to do on their own, and moving to more independent learning. It is not mere assistance in performing a task; it is intended to move the student beyond their current level of ability (Gibbons, 2002). Students can then move to a higher level of understanding and independently demonstrate their learning. The participants did not complete this process by stepping aside to observe whether their students were able to independently carry

out the task successfully or not. The "scaffolding" I observed appeared to be directed teaching rather than scaffolding in a social constructivist sense.

Curriculum and preparation of lessons.

The teachers in the study were conscious of the fact that they were mandated to teach to specific curricular outcomes. It is probable that most ELLs would eventually reach these outcomes, however, it may not necessarily be on the prescribed or expected timeline of the curriculum. The participants were concerned that, although teaching to the outcomes is required and reflects what students need to learn, it does not take into consideration or address the special learning needs of ELLs.

All participants believed that teaching ELLs was their primary responsibility and concentrated on the ELLs in their classes. During my classroom observations the teachers directed instruction to all students but emphasis was placed on making sure that ELLs understood what was being taught. All the participants modified their lessons and instructional approaches to accommodate the needs of ELLs. Modification was also needed for some native English speakers who had a range of learning needs but it was required to a greater extent for ELLs. The more ELLs there are in a class, the more likely it is that multiple levels of adaptation will be needed in a single lesson and the more time will be required to make such adaptations.

Teachers of ELLs require particular knowledge and skills if they are to meet the demands mainstream education places on diverse learners: they must be

able to make academic content accessible and integrate language with content (Gibbons, 2002; Menken & Look, 2000). Research indicates that as teachers become more confident in their knowledge and skills in a subject area they are more effective in their pedagogy (Shulman, 1987).

Classroom environment.

One of the factors that clearly affects the performance of ELLs is their personal relationship with their teacher and the classroom environment in which they learn. Each of the participating teachers was aware of this and each had different methods of creating classroom relationships and building a positive learning environment. Sarah empowered students by giving them some autonomy. She noted that students were usually given choices to work on activities that were at their level to empower them and give them the opportunity to feel confident in whatever they were learning. Cummins (2001d) would agree that empowering minority students by providing them with the opportunity to have autonomy in the classroom is additive to their success at school. Providing such an environment is recognized as the basis for students' learning (Lucas et al., 2008).

Lynette wanted her students to feel comfortable, to be part of the community of learners in her classroom and more importantly, to be successful in their new culture. I noted that even though there were many students from different ethnic groups in her class they treated each other with respect. Lynette said that she had to work hard to promote this environment at the beginning of the

year. The literature is clear in stating that learning is enhanced when students are in comfortable learning environments (Dornyei, 2007; Lucas et al., 2008).

Strategies used for teaching ELLs.

The teachers used a number of specific strategies in teaching the ELLs in their classrooms. These included gestures, pictures, peer teaching, modeling, group teaching, and oral discussions. Sarah also incorporated songs, dances, and music in her teaching. Vygotsky (1978) discussed the use of gestures in facilitating not only learning but also communication among children who have no common language. Abril (2003) and Haught and McCafferty (2008) discussed the very effective way that hand signs and gestures assist vocabulary building when used along with English words, and songs provide repetition in motivating students who have difficulty with language development (Abril, 2003; Tissington & La Cour, 2010).

Language learning requires a constant construction of meaning in order to make learning comprehensible (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). During my classroom observations, the teachers modeled and repeated language in meaningful ways. Krashen (1989) argued that comprehensible input, when simplified, can help learners to acquire a new language in positive ways. Based on Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, teachers who engage in lowering the anxiety level of students who are learning a new language provide an environment that is more conducive to learning.

All three participants also used hands-on activities and found them to be successful. The use of visuals and hands-on materials has been shown to be effective in helping students understand concepts and thereby build their literacy skills (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Sarah believed that drawing a picture, talking about it, and writing about it helped ELLs to make connections. The research literature supports the concept that drawing pictures as a means of communication helps ELLs in the early stages of expression and serves as a bridge to develop their writing (Dyson, 1984; Morrow, Tracey, & Del Nero, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

April used drama as a strategy to provide a way for students to better internalize and understand the concepts she taught. According to Rieg and Paquette (2009) ELLs can benefit from engaging in drama and movement activities to develop literacy skills. They pointed out that in addition to learning literacy skills students can develop other skills such as being creative, becoming socially engaged, solving problems, and enhancing rhythm and rhyming. Similarly Haught and McCafferty (2008) discuss the use of drama as a means of engendering an opportunity that provides ELLs in developing second language skills.

Using themes as a way of planning for teaching, as suggested by Freeman and Freeman (2003), is another way that teachers can help support and build literacy and academic skills by engaging students more actively in the learning process. Themes "promote the view of both teaching and learning as meaningful enterprise" (Lipson et al., 1993, p. 25). Two of the participants talked about using

themes, but I did not observe them using themes during my time in their

classrooms. There appears to be some inconsistency between what the

participants were telling me they were doing and what was occurring in practice.

I reflected upon the comment made by Lynette that it was hard to get

material to address the different levels of ability among her students. Perhaps this

difficulty was enough to deter the teachers from using themes regularly. Why

were they not finding the materials they need? It is probable that the lack of

library support may be partly responsible for teachers not accessing appropriate

material and resources.

> the books aren't out there . . . There is nobody really in this school that
>
> could actually say "OK these are the books. You can order them." It just
>
> takes time to get all this stuff organized. So if I can find a book that
>
> actually has their culture in it I would use it. (T2L INT 3, April 2011)

Reading books related to a theme reinforces the concepts being taught as well as

builds vocabulary and makes teaching and learning more meaningful, relevant,

and interesting (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Crowell, 1989; Hadaway, 2009;

Lipson et al., 1993).

Technology in the classroom was readily available to all three teachers.

They all had Smart Boards but these were used variably by each teacher: April

used the Smart Board the most while Lynette seldom used it except to access the

calendar and pictures from the Internet to illustrate the concepts her students were

studying.

Sarah and April used the World Wide Web to access a variety of resources for different purposes. For example they used the *Jolly Phonics[17]* and *Starfall Program*[18] primarily to help support students' learning words and pronunciation. The *Starfall Program* reinforced phonic skills and had visuals associated with the concepts students were studying. Sarah and April liked working with the programs because they had visual, oral, aural, and kinesthetic components and reinforced the letter/sound combinations of the alphabet.

Other websites utilized by April were *Learning A to Z (2014)[19]*: the online reading program, wildlife discovery education, and video streaming: "I use a lot of videos from that site and the Smart Board has its own website too that you can download different things, different concepts and things like that. Often I'll just Google things too . . . images, or whatever concepts, or dictionaries, whatever" (T3A INT 4, June 2011). April also used the Smart Board to demonstrate concepts for research purposes. These experiences were followed by discussion so that students had the opportunity to talk about what they were learning.

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[17] The Jolly Phonics Program originated in 1987. It is based on a phonic method of teaching the letter sounds in a way that is multi-sensory helping students to become fluent readers.

[18] Starfall is a program opened in September of 2002 as a free public service to teach children to read with phonics. This systematic phonics approach, in conjunction with phonemic awareness practice, is perfect for preschool, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, special education, home school, and English language development (ELL, ESL).

[19] A-Z is a program which involves leveled reading, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, reading fluency, alphabet, and vocabulary. The teaching resources include professionally developed downloadable leveled books, lesson plans, worksheets, and reading assessments. The resources are designed for use from whole class to small group to individual work whether with core, ESOL, special education, RTI (Response to Intervention), bilingual and other such programs. All materials are research-based, standards-based, and results oriented.

Lessons were always interactive, engaging students when she was using the Smart Board to participate and keep them focused and involved.

Sarah expressed her view on the importance of the Smart Board in supporting her teaching.

> It's a huge, huge wonderful resource in terms of visuals because we talk about other places in Canada and they barely know where they live right now because they've just landed here you know, they've probably never been out of this neighbourhood. They don't have transportation half the time and so the visuals [help]: like when we studied Iqaluit. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

Sarah also provided an example of how she integrated student culture into learning during one of our interviews. She noted that some of her ELLs had lived on farms. The farms from which they came were not only different from farms in Canada but also from those in the countries from which the other students came. However, the concept of the farm was familiar to all the students and Sarah saw this as a bridge to help students learn English because they could all identify with it. One of her refugee students from Kenya had camels and monkeys on her farm, and the students had a lively discussion about this.

> We would talk about the farms in the countries they came from because most of them were from rural settings. They would share what that was like and of course it would be totally different coming from Thailand than coming from Somalia or what it was like in Iran. One of the girls had been

a refugee in Kenya and her grandfather had camels, lots and lots of camels

on his farm. They loved talking about the animals and the differences of

the animals from where they came from. (T1S INT 2, April 2011)

Here Sarah was using a concept that is common across all cultures that can be

used to engage and connect students in learning together in a meaningful context.

Building background knowledge for the students, especially in a new

culture, was identified by all participants as critical in all subject areas of the

curriculum. They believed that to acquire background knowledge in Canadian

culture, students needed to engage in a variety of experiences including fieldtrips,

artifacts, picture books, and information from websites. Such experiences

contributed to the growing body of knowledge ELLs were developing.

Organizing groups for learning activities.

A belief in the value of having students work in groups was consistent

across all three participants. They all stated that organizing students in groups

benefited ELLs in developing oral language skills but the socialization also

creates an environment in which all students can feel part of a community of

learners. Group work provides an opportunity to practice specific academic

language discourse and solve problems on task-related activities. The

participating teachers recognized that through group activities both native English

speakers and ELLs were able to help each other. While group work can be

successful in encouraging social interaction in assisting all students learn, there

are some potential drawbacks, especially with ELLs. When pairing ELLs who

speak the same first language, it is important to note that teachers must be aware

of the ability level of the students in their first language if they are to support

another student who may not be as proficient (Goldenberg, 2008). The problem is

that unless the classroom teacher speaks the language of the student they may not

be pairing students adequately to work in groups or with a partner. The only way

to overcome this problem is to have an interpreter available to provide feedback

to the classroom teacher. While this is an ideal situation the reality is that there

are few interpreters available and funds may not be available to support such a

service at the school.

Vygotsky (1978) reminded educators that the teacher or more capable

adult as mediator is essential in helping students engage in the learning process

and such mediation provides a way for students to gain new knowledge. Novice

learners can acquire language through the help of more knowledgeable peers by

engaging in social interaction. In this way Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal

development can be accessed, which enables students to develop cognitively (as

noted in Chapter Two). The need for socializing as a vehicle for learning English

was expressed by all participants. They believed that social interaction provided

the greatest opportunity for ELLs to practice and use the English language as they

were learning it. Encouraging social interaction was important to the participating

teachers and as a result they designated time for what could be best referred to as

team building. Lynette, in particular, emphasized that team building was

important as part of the socialization process and she spent at least 4 to 6 weeks at

the beginning of the year concentrating upon building a climate conducive for learning where students felt safe talking and sharing ideas together.

All three participants thought that actively engaging students in classroom learning was necessary and they encouraged them to personally connect with others. Native English-speaking students would serve as models, by helping others, engaging in discussions, and demonstrating their learning. April believed that social interaction was important because it allowed ELLs to develop their oral language skills. She modeled oral language at the beginning of her lessons when introducing and teaching a concept, and then had her students talk about the concept with each other to develop their language skills.

Of the three participating teachers, Sarah was the only one who used learning centers. Sarah was convinced that her students benefitted from working in centers:

> Well, there would be several reasons. One would be differentiation, so that they can work on something at their own level, doing what they're capable of doing. The other is that it opens up "room for oral discussions and they really need that before they can do anything else, they need to be able to talk. (T1S INT 4, April 2011)

I observed that there was a lot of talk and interaction among students in their center groups. Most of the time students were on-task but sometimes they were not focused on the topic. I also noticed that Sarah did not monitor the groups carefully because she was always engaged in working with individual students.

During center time some of the students spoke their first language to help each other if they did not understand an English word or understand what they needed to do on an assignment.

Lynette and April were intentional in the way they organized their students to work in groups. Lynette's students were grouped in different ability levels, and were carefully organized to support each other based on ability levels. ELLs were paired with students who could read, comprehend, and understand as well as explain what they needed to do to help ELLs. Lynette had different expectations for different students because students were at different levels of language development. She would engage in frequent comprehension checks to confirm that students understood the material taught.

In each of the three classrooms, the teacher placed students in heterogeneous groupings because of the nature of the diversity (i.e., many students were from different cultures and spoke different languages, and many different levels of English ability were present). In each classroom the teacher's objective was for students to work collaboratively to help each other. April's perspective on group work was that when students worked together with a partner or in a group after she taught a concept, the students' learning was assisted. This is consistent with research in the area which demonstrates that organizing students to work in groups helps to make language input more comprehensible and repetitive and is supportive for ELLs. Group work also provides multiple ways to make language meaningful and therefore students, both native speakers and ELLs,

are able to share their ideas, engage in being more responsible in contributing

ideas, and clarifying their own understanding (Gibbons, 2002).

Teaching vocabulary.

All three teachers identified vocabulary as being particularly difficult to

teach. Lynette found that she had to read many books to her students about three

times and would go over vocabulary repetitively before ELLs would learn it.

Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, and Vaughn (2004) emphasize the use of read-aloud

books to develop vocabulary skills not only for native speakers but for ELLs as

well. Lynette noted that teaching vocabulary during Guided Reading was

important but follow-up was difficult because of the rotation of her groups. She

saw different groups on different days. It was not possible to work with the same

group each day to provide consistency in reinforcing vocabulary development.

> They remember the vocabulary. A lot of times it's difficult to remember
>
> the meaning of the vocabulary. It's very difficult for them to take. They
>
> remember the word. They know how to decode the word, the meaning
>
> sometimes is lost, so I have to constantly refresh this . . . The language
>
> should be used hopefully at home and outside the school as well. I can
>
> only do so much. (T2L INT 4, May 2011)

Weisman and Hansen (2007) suggest that active involvement in a variety of

learning activities can help ELLs use and apply their knowledge of words. Sarah

said:

Vocabulary is always a consideration because many ELL kids dont know

higher-level vocabulary so you need to have visuals, sometimes you have

to have drama, pantomime, songs, other ways of reaching kids so that they

will remember what the vocabulary is. (T1S INT 5, April 2011)

All three teachers in this study emphasized the use of oral language in

developing vocabulary and fluency for ELLs. They actively provided numerous

opportunities for ELLs to talk with native English -speaking students. They

believed discussion among the students was important because it encouraged

them to engage in talk and thereby to practice their new language.

When new vocabulary was introduced, especially when a new concept

was being taught, Sarah tried to provide a visual image to accompany the word to

make it more meaningful for ELLs to understand. She also tried to use the word

in a variety of different contexts. Sarah believed that drawing a picture, talking

about it, and writing about it helped ELLs to make connections. Fu (2004) stated

that this approach is beneficial to assist ELLs in developing their writing and

speaking skills by sharing their writing orally.

April was not aware of the concepts of BICS and CALP, but was aware on

a practical level of the difference between everyday language and academic

language. Everyday communication (BICS) was not so much of a problem for

April and her students because they communicated continually with their peers

and their teacher. Regular use of BICS meant that it was less challenging for

them than academic language (CALP). April estimated that it would take ELLs about 3 years to develop their academic language.

> J.N.: What challenges do you see with the academic language?

> A: Oh a lot, some of them don't even know the basic language . . . it's way too much. We're taking a big jump, they're not really even ready for that language at all, we are still learning the basics, so it's probably very overwhelming for them. (T3A INT 1, May 2011)

During my classroom observations I saw all three teachers reinforce academic language by drawing attention to specific vocabulary and emphasizing it within the context of their teaching of content materials. All three participants made it a point to pause during teaching of a lesson and discuss some of the vocabulary that was new to ELLs. While all three participants recognized the need for use and repetition of academic vocabulary outside specific lessons, I did not observe any concerted effort to integrate academic vocabulary consistently into broader classroom usage. The teachers did not appear to be aware that for best retention of academic vocabulary, it must also be integrated and used repetitively in everyday classroom discourse. One of the ways in which *task words* and concepts can be learned is through repetition (DiCamilla & Anton, 1997).

Opportunities must also be sought for academic language to be used outside of the classroom. Ideally, if students consistently use academic language in other contexts, they will see it as meaningful and be able to automatize it.

CALP learned in school should especially be shared in the home environment if possible. However, sharing at home cannot occur for many ELLs because of language difficulties which make it difficult to bridge home and school. This poses a significant challenge for ELLs, and was noted by the participating teachers who commented on the lack of English and poor language skills in both English and native languages evident in many student homes, impeding the reinforcement of academic vocabulary.

The participating teachers encouraged students in helping each other in their first languages. In this way they showed flexibility and the students used their home languages as an asset in order to help them learn. The participating teachers were tolerant when students spoke their first language among themselves, whether they were in or out of the classroom. They believed that, as Sarah said, allowing ELLs to engage in dialogue in their first language "helped them grow in a second language by quite a bit" (T1S INT 5, April 2011). At the same time, while they tolerated/understood first language use, the teachers were also cognizant of the fact that they needed to engage in learning English. At home, the use of English often was restricted because parents were not comfortable speaking it. Consequently, the teachers did put some restrictions on the use of home language allowing students to use it when necessary, and being more restrictive as the year progressed and competency in English increased.

The teachers valued field trips outside the school as a support for their students' learning. Visiting various sites around the city provided important

learning experiences for both ELLs and native English speakers. Fieldtrips in content areas such as social studies and science provided an opportunity for hands-on activities, learning vocabulary, developing background knowledge, and accessing resources not otherwise available.

I asked Lynette how valuable she thought the field trips were for her students. She replied:

> Oh, unbelievably valuable. You cannot write about something that you don't know about. You cannot read something you don't know about, the more experienced you get in this life, the better well read you are and the better prepared you are to write about it. (T2L INT 4, May 2011)

The participating teachers believed that through the experiences gained from going on field trips, ELLs in their classrooms retained more information because they had the opportunity to visit and learn at various sites around the city. Many ELLs and or other students living in disadvantaged situations may not leave their neighborhoods and field trips are important avenues to expand their experience and expose them to a variety of learning situations.

While field trips were valuable, all three teachers had difficulty funding them. One of the problems they faced was that many and sometimes most of their students' parents were not able to afford the required fees to go on field trips and the school did not provide funds. April tried to compensate for this by organizing

as many in-school field trips[20] as possible. The hands-on activities and

experiences associated with these have been demonstrated by previous

researchers to help ELLs learn vocabulary, understand key concepts, become

engaged in the learning process, build background knowledge, and make learning

meaningful for them (Weisman & Hansen, 2007). Fieldtrips can be an excellent

way of accessing resources in the community that could enhance students'

knowledge and maximize learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Assessment.

One of the findings from my study was that the participating teachers did

not agree with the methods used by the school district to assess ELLs. Mandatory

assessment standards in relation to curriculum outcomes and expectations are

based on pencil and paper tests. The participating teachers were adamant that

pencil and paper assessments were not appropriate for ELLs. The reason for this

was that many ELLs were not adequately prepared to engage in formal written

district level assessments such as the Highest Level of Achievement Tests

(HLATs).[21] Their developing English and writing skills put them at a distinct

disadvantage in such testing situations. There was too much processing required

for them to move from thought to speaking to writing for them to handle such a

task well. As pointed out by Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger

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[20] An in-school field trip is a learning experience organized by community based resource groups that come into the school and present a program organized along a specific subject area related to the program of studies.

[21] The HLATs are given to all students in the district's public schools once per year. The PATs are standardized tests given by the Province of Alberta to students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 each year. Only students in these particular grades write this test. Students are tested on the four core subjects of social studies, science, language arts and math.

(2006), "An overwhelming majority of assessment tools are in English only, presenting a potential threat to the usefulness of assessments when ELLs' lack of English prevents them from understanding test items" (p. 24). Similar findings were expressed by Gándara, Maxell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005). For these reasons, participating teachers expressed concerns about being able to meet the demands of the school district to prepare ELLs for district level and provincial achievement tests, and had a sense of apprehension when it came to formal assessment and being accountable for the academic progress of ELLs. Teachers who teach ELLs are faced with the dilemma of assessing their students in a system that is not geared to the language ability of the students.

Despite the reservations that the participants had about formal tests, these were required and ELLs have to write them. April taught Grade 3 and so she had the additional task of preparing the students for both the Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) and the school district's HLATs. April indicated that the PATs and HLATs created some stress for her students as "they don't enjoy it, and it's a lot of stress and sometimes you know, we stress them out because it's such a big test and they don't do very well because they are so stressed out" (T3A INT 3, May 2011). She saw little benefit to either the school board or her students from the standardized test scores of her ELLs.

Sarah preferred to use one-on-one assessment because, based on her experience, ELLs are able to better demonstrate what they know orally. She said:

It's a challenge because you have to find ways to pull them [out] and work

with them one-on-one. You can't just do it as a large group and they just

can't do it in written form, but it can be done and it's important to do it

that way I think because otherwise if you just expect them to do it exactly

the same way all the other students do and do it in written form then you

don't really have an accurate understanding of what they really know.

(T1S INT 6, May 2011)

The use of one-on-one assessment is supported in the research literature.

It provides the most accurate and effective way for teachers to assess students

(Lederhouse, 2003; Shepard et al., 2005; Torrance, 1994). Gil and Woodruff

(2011) indicated that "ineffective or poorly trained teachers and insufficient

access to appropriate instructional and assessment materials are two factors that

contribute to poor performance of English language learners" (p. 14). All three

teachers preferred to use one-on-one assessments because they saw from

observation that ELLs were better able to demonstrate what they knew orally

rather than in writing. Informal assessment provides teachers with authentic

knowledge with regards to their students' understanding of a concept

(Lederhouse, 2003). This form of evaluation becomes more of an exploration of

understanding on both the part of the student and the teacher than a simple

assessment of what is and is not understood (Torrance, 1994).

This study also revealed one factor that presented, and possibly even

fostered, a negative societal attitude towards ELLs. The ranking of schools based

on provincial achievement test results by such organizations as the Fraser

Institute[22] has a negative effect on students and schools. While this is likely an

inadvertent and unintended consequence, the practice shows an underlying lack of

understanding of student demographics and the concomitant needs of certain

schools. Schools with a high proportion of ELLs frequently rank low in such

comparisons. This was the case in two of the three schools in this study and was a

very sore point for two of the three teachers. They claimed that no account was

taken for the make-up of their particular school population and maintained that it

unfairly demeaned ELL's academic abilities. Ranking the schools is demoralizing

to the teachers and degrading to the students. Roessingh (2012) noted that the

PATs are divisive and that the Fraser Institute ranking makes this worse. My

observation was consistent with Roessingh's (2012) point. Those who rank

schools do not have an inside view of what happens in particular schools and

therefore the ranking is unfair and punitive to schools with particular

demographics. This statement highlights a very important point: support for

ELLs has to go far beyond their teachers and include an understanding of their

circumstances by the community at large.

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[22] The Fraser Institute is an independent non-partisan research and educational organization based in Canada that publishes peer-reviewed research into critical economic and public policy issues including taxation, government spending, health care, school performance, and trade http://www.fraserinstitute.org/about-us/overview.aspx

Supports Teachers Identified as Necessary for Teaching ELLs

The participating teachers noted that it was important for them to have specific supports in place to assist them in performing their teaching of ELLs effectively. They were overwhelmed with the range of culturally diverse students in their classrooms and were forthcoming about the supports they needed.

Professional development.

The three teachers stated that their pre-service teacher education programs had not prepared them for teaching ELLs. They believed that with relevant professional development they would be better able to understand and teach ELLs more effectively. They most frequently mentioned professional development in-services as supports that could help them "on the job." All three participants had attended at least some in-services specifically to develop their understanding of teaching ELLs. However, they had varied experiences and all were limited in the amount of professional development they received. For example, Sarah had attended an average of only four professional development in-services a year over the last 3 years. Lynette had attended even fewer: in the last 3 years she had attended six professional development in-services in total. April did not attend any professional development sessions during her first year at Findlay School, but in her second year she began the Balanced Literacy Program, which she continued into her third year of teaching (the year in which this study took place). However, the Balanced Literacy Program does not directly address the needs of ELLs. In addition, April was also involved in the district's new Teacher Induction Program.

With the influx of ELLs in mainstream classrooms, the growing need for teacher preparation and in-service in instructional strategies was apparent to the participating teachers. April expressed the need to learn a variety of strategies to support programming in the following way:

> Just different strategies and like how to multitask and have different things and differentiate and have different things going on in the class so that they can kind of get to their level. Have different programming for them and kind of teach them how to do that I guess and it is, I mean, it just is so hard because there are so many backgrounds. (T3A INT 6, June 2011)

The school district's Balanced Literacy Program was a 2-year in-service training program that all three teachers participated in. Sarah was in the first year and April was in the second year of the program. Lynette was fully trained in Balanced Literacy. While each of the participating teachers believed that the program had many good ideas for teaching literacy, they found they had to modify their lessons for ELLs. Some of the strategies were challenging when teaching ELLs. Lynette said:

> It's hard for them. I have to bring it way down to their level. I use some parts of Balanced Literacy but there are some parts that are just too hard. (T2L INT 6, May 2011)

Sarah was the only participant who was involved in a support group with other teachers who taught ELLs. Sarah found that networking with other teachers was important and worthwhile for her because she not only could share her

concerns but at the same time she could learn from them. This allowed her to access teaching resources and ideas that she could implement in her practice, and was a form of professional development for her. It was also a way to gather resources to support her program. An important point revealed in my interview with Sarah was that the support group was made up of only a few teachers. Most of the individuals involved in the group were teacher assistants. Sarah expressed surprise at finding that teacher assistants were the ones who were doing most of the teaching of ELLs. She did not agree with this because her perception was that the teacher should be the one in charge and the teacher assistants were there as a support and should be guided by the teacher. This observation suggests that there may be inappropriate delegation of some instructional responsibilities and implies that the needs of ELLs might not be adequately met by the EAs. It also suggests that mainstream teachers may not be wholly involved in teaching ELLs and it highlights the urgency of the current situation.

Lynette and April did not engage in any networking beyond working with teachers in their immediate school environment. However, they both stated that they would like to attend a group to network and observe other teachers who were teaching a large number of ELLs. Lynette in particular stated that she had a family to raise and thought that meeting with other teachers during the day was not suitable for her. She preferred not to have meetings after school because of family constraints.

All three participants reported little or no ESL specialist support in their schools, and they wanted some direct coaching from an ESL consultant to further enhance their pedagogy. Fu (2004) suggested that teachers should work collaboratively with the professionals to more effectively program work together with students. Of the three participants, only Sarah had access to an ESL consultant. Sarah valued the support of having the ESL consultant work with her but reported that the time available with the consultant was not enough. She saw an additional need for a co-ordinator at the school level that could help with collecting resources, providing ideas to support teaching, observing her in the classroom, and generally giving her advice.

The teachers also expressed a need for the ESL consultants to model lessons alongside them and to provide support in helping them develop their pedagogy. Lynette would have liked to have mentoring as well as further professional education. The consultant would experience some of the challenges Lynette faced, observe her, and provide suggestions on how she could help her students. She believed the consultant would be able to demonstrate teaching a lesson, assist with modification of lesson plans, assist with testing, acquire translators for parents when necessary, and provide feedback to her. She also would like to have a consultant with whom she could discuss theory and how it related to practice. This latter was an interesting statement because of the three participants, Lynette was the one who most adamantly maintained that theory was not important to her pedagogy.

April, the teacher with the least experience of the three participants, was not aware of the supports she could access, specifically the ESL consultants. This may have been due to the fact that she was a novice teacher and had not had time to seek out the resources available to her. April was still in "survival mode," learning as much as she could and as quickly as she could about teaching ELLs.

April had an educational assistant who worked with special needs students. Every morning for half an hour, one of her students had individual help. April said this student had some processing problems and her academic skills were very low. Sarah and Lynette both indicated their need for an educational assistant (EA) that they could in-service to help in the classroom. Lynette believed that it was the teacher's role to do the teaching and plan for instruction and she would therefore intend to use an EA primarily to help students and work collaboratively with them.

Classroom resources for teaching ELLs.

In their interviews, the teachers indicated the need for resources that they thought would assist them with teaching ELLs. In order of importance, their suggestions included primarily human resources, multicultural books, financial support for field trips, and web based or other program materials. This finding with respect to resources teachers need to effectively do their job is similar to those reported by Necochea and Cline (2000). It is a critical problem for teachers who are already struggling to teach ELLs, and not having adequate and relevant resources created some degree of frustration for the participating teachers. Such

frustration can lead to teachers resigning themselves to providing only basic support, which can only be a detriment to the education of ELLs.

All three teachers saw the benefit of utilizing children's literature to support language learning. However, all claimed that they were unable to access a range of multicultural books. Sarah said that she liked to use good literature in her classroom: "I use a lot of picture books that have received medal awards and authors that were well respected like *Pat Hutchins, Eve Bunting*, *Tomie DePaola*, *Eric Carle*, *Don Freeman*, *Dr. Seuss*, *Ezra Jack Keats*, *Kevin Henkes*, *Mercer Meyer*, *Robert Kraus*, *Doreen Cronin, Judith Viorst*" (T1S INT 4, April 2011). Despite this variety of literature, Sarah did not make any particular reference to multicultural literature she might have used. Lynette and April did not elaborate on specific authors or books they used. The few multicultural books they did mention were mostly about Aboriginal culture. They indicated that their schools lacked books about other cultures.

Summary

The participating teachers in this study found their teaching of ELLs challenging. They thought that they did not have the necessary background to effectively do their jobs. The participating teachers relied on previous experiences and did not have any theoretical understanding of how to approach teaching ELLs. They used a variety of instructional strategies to teach ELLs but they did not have a clear understanding of the personal histories of their students. The participating teachers believed that they needed more professional

development and supports to effectively teach ELLs. The participating teachers

and parents did not understand each other and this created a barrier in building

relationships between home and school. In the final chapter of this dissertation I

will address the research questions, consider the implications of my findings, and

make recommendations for further research.

Chapter Seven:

Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the pedagogy of three elementary school teachers who were teaching English language learners in mainstream classrooms. The study set out to uncover how teachers developed and adapted their pedagogy, and also to explore the supports and resources teachers require for teaching ELLs. The three questions guiding this study are presented below, along with a brief summary of the findings.

Summary of Findings

In response to Question #1 "How do teachers in mainstream classrooms develop their pedagogical approaches for teaching English language learners?", the data showed that, by and large, the participating teachers developed their pedagogy by relying on trial and error. This approach was based on their past personal experiences teaching native English speakers. This finding is consistent with Elbaz's (1983) study on how teachers acquire practical knowledge. The participating teachers did not have any prior education with respect to teaching ELLs, and did not refer to any theoretical grounding in developing their pedagogy. The finding is also consistent with the observations made by other researchers (Krashen, 1989; Necochea & Cline, 2000) that in-service teachers tend to neglect the use of theory in their pedagogy.

Necochea and Cline (2000) maintained that there is a need for theory to inform pedagogy, particularly for ELLs, and that teachers cannot rely wholly on

practical knowledge alone. Theory is an important part of pedagogical understanding (Krashen,1989) and theoretical knowledge is necessary for teachers if they are to build their background knowledge about teaching ELLs. Perhaps if teachers could experience a combination of practical knowledge and relevant educational theory in their pre-service teacher education programs (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), they could develop a more effective pedagogy for ELLs as well as for native English speakers. Theory provides a foundational understanding, and therefore explanation of the relevance of educational theory. Fang (1996) emphasized the need for pre-service teacher education to explain how to apply educational theory in the classroom. It is the application of theory, not the understanding of theory that seems to be lacking in teacher education programs and among teachers.

Question # 2 asked, "How do teachers adapt their instructional strategies to support students who are English language learners?" The data revealed that the participating teachers adapted their instructional strategies by closely monitoring each individual student's learning and modifying their instruction according to the student's needs. All three teachers had a close relationship with and an understanding of their students and they were able to identify individual needs. The teachers used a variety of pedagogical strategies. Modifying lessons was essential for teaching ELLs, however the teachers did not receive guidance on how to do this effectively.

Using the first language to support the development of an additional

language is a viable and effective approach to helping ELLs learn a second

language. Although the participants partially "allowed" the use of first languages

in the classroom, they were intent upon having ELLs improve their English

language skills and quickly moved towards English language usage only. This

practice ignores what is known in the research literature about first language use

in support of learning a second language. The research literature emphasizes that

teachers need to learn about the ways in which second languages are acquired and

they need to apply this knowledge in their classrooms (Constantino, 1994;

Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007; Gersten, 1996; Gersten & Baker, 2000;

Karathanos, 2010; Penfield, 1987).

One important instructional modification made by all the teachers was the

adaptation of assessment strategies for ELLs due to the difficulties ELLs

encounter in undertaking pencil and paper tests. The challenges of pencil and

paper tests reflect the inability of ELLs to express themselves adequately in

writing. The teachers indicated that oral testing appeared to be the best way for

them to assess ELLs.

The participants used scaffolding as an instructional strategy for both

ELLs and native speakers. This strategy is successful if it is properly understood

and implemented. If teachers learned and consciously reflected upon the four

stages of scaffolding outlined by Gibbons (2006) then their pedagogy would be

significantly improved. The key to good scaffolding is intervention in which a

teacher matches instruction with the support the students need as they move from what they can do with a little help, to what they can accomplish independently. The teachers in this study did not fully understand the concept of scaffolding and were not fully aware of the impact of using it. Years of experience are often required for teachers to learn how to effectively scaffold students' learning (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). The partial understanding of scaffolding demonstrated by the teachers in this study is an example of why teachers need to be familiar with educational theory.

One of the problem areas uncovered in this study was the difficulty encountered by the participants in establishing home/school relationships. Parental involvement was minimal at best and generally absent, despite the best intentions on the part of the teachers. The teachers were challenged by their lack of cultural knowledge and their difficulty in communicating with the parents of ELLs. They saw a need for more information from the home and believed that this would assist in building trust between the school and the parents/families of the ELLs. In addition, they needed school district and parent interpreters to help them at their respective schools. The research literature refers to the benefits of involving parents in the education of their children (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Mapp, 1997; Piper, 1993; Potter, 1989; Walberg, 1984). One of these benefits is the enhanced success of students in school. In order to overcome these various difficulties, the onus should be on the school to take the initiative.

Schools have to be inviting and welcoming places, providing the necessary resources to support the parents of ELLs.

The data in response to Question # 3, "What supports do teachers in mainstream classrooms require in order to effectively teach English language learners?" indicated that the participants needed to have access to specialized individuals and material resources, not only in relation to their pedagogy, but also in relation to cultural and language knowledge. The availability of specialist individuals such as ESL consultants would have been beneficial to the participating teachers to coach them and work alongside them on an ongoing basis. This confirms Batt's (2008) finding that ESL consultants need to meet regularly with teachers to provide support.

Additional classroom supports such as the availability of educational assistants and collaboration with other professionals who work in similar classroom environments (e.g., through a support group) were needs expressed by all three participants. These findings are very similar to those of Gándara et al. (2005) in their study of ELLs in the U. S. This suggests that the supports needed by teachers of ELLs are similar in different countries and with different language/cultural groups.

This study demonstrates that PD for teachers is important in addressing diverse needs in the classroom and that teachers need to employ new ways to improve instruction. Professional development needs to be intentional and on-going (Gándara et al., 2005; McBride, 2004). The participating teachers

expressed their concerns that time was an issue and there was a lack of available funds to attend regular PD sessions. These same drawbacks to providing PD were also reported in a study by Chai and Merry (2006). I believe my findings indicate the need for school districts to allocate funds for school administrators and teachers alike to take course work in ESL to enable them to increase their competence in teaching diverse students in the mainstream classroom. As the influx of ELLs continues to impact public schools, educators at all levels must be appropriately prepared.

Implications

There are many implications that arise from the findings of this study, implications for schools in both urban and rural areas, school districts, teacher preparation programs in post secondary institutions, and educational administrators and policy makers. As noted earlier in the study, the ELL population is gradually rising in mainstream classrooms and it is critical that teachers receive the supports necessary for them to meet their particular learning needs.

The teachers in this study were not prepared for the challenges of teaching large numbers of ELLs. Ladson-Billings (2001b) has noted,

> Most teachers have little or no genuine experience with cultures different from their own. Although many teacher education programs offer courses, workshops and modules that address multicultural education, these

offerings tend to be superficial and tangential to the real lives of students.

(p. 78)

A major implication of the study is that teachers need to better understand the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students they teach. The participants' perceptions of their roles were influenced by their initial university teacher education. They had not taken any courses in teaching ELLs and therefore had not consciously considered the needs of ELLs in Canadian classrooms. Teachers need to re-conceptualize their approach to teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. They need to develop a repertoire of strategies that reflect a relevant pedagogical instructional approach in order to teach the students in their classrooms. Teachers need a pedagogy that is relevant to their students' culture. The effect of this pedagogy would not only create an environment for learning and understanding but it would also help students know that they are an intrinsic part of a community of learners that helps to extend their academic excellence and position in life within school and beyond. Ladson- Billings (1994) stated that most teachers report that their pre-service teacher preparation did little or nothing to prepare them for today's diverse classrooms.

Teacher education programs need to more effectively prepare the pre-service teachers who will enter mainstream classrooms in the future. Considering topics of discussion that encompass multiculturalism (i.e., cultures, language acquisition, how students assimilate into a new country, immigration issues and understanding and working with families) is essential for all teachers entering the

profession, both at the elementary and secondary school levels. It may also be necessary to require students entering faculties of education to develop some understanding in sociolinguistics. This would provide additional background knowledge on which student teachers could build a framework for effective practice. Such studies as that conducted by Heath (1983) would provide valuable insight for pre-service teachers so they could begin to understand the differing sociolinguistic backgrounds of diverse students.

As indicated in the findings of the study, the participants had only a partial understanding of how to utilize the technique of scaffolding in their pedagogy. Scaffolding is a technique that is understood in educational research to be an effective pedagogical tool for teaching. Classroom teachers need to understand the theoretical basis of scaffolding. This could be achieved through professional development. Teachers could also observe scaffolding in action through demonstrations and coaching. Appropriate understanding and use of scaffolding would benefit both native speakers and ELLs.

A further implication of the study is that more in-service and/or professional development is needed for teachers in regard to specific instructional strategies for ELLs (e.g., teaching academic vocabulary). They would also benefit from further education that examines the theoretical underpinning of teaching ELLs and demonstrates how to integrate that theory into pedagogy. Teachers also need information about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds that are most common among the ELLs in their school or school district. These

professional development needs for in-service teachers can be achieved through workshops organized by school districts and teacher professional organizations. Such initiatives may require some degree of mandatory attendance by teachers.

A clear need was expressed by the teachers for ESL teacher specialists or consultants to work alongside teachers who have large numbers of ELLs in their mainstream classrooms. In order to achieve this it would be necessary to provide ESL consultants with more time to work with teachers in their classrooms. Furthermore, engaging in collaboration with other mainstream teachers, examining successful pedagogical practices and reflecting on their own pedagogy were identified as potentially useful and desirable approaches to addressing the current challenges teachers encounter in working with ELLs in mainstream classrooms. This move would eventually work in the best interest of ELLs and would be supportive and encouraging for teachers. It is important that time be provided to allow teachers to meet together on a regular basis to engage in observing other teachers and to share ideas, materials, and resources.

A wider range of multicultural literature is needed to enhance the classroom learning and experience of all students. Multicultural literature has the potential to broaden students' backgrounds and promote cross-cultural awareness. It can also be used across subject areas and can make a significant contribution to the curriculum, weaving in a multitude of learning opportunities that would benefit both native English speakers and ELLs. My observation is that many such books are available but the teachers in my study were not able to access them. In

the last 15 to 20 years a growing number of multicultural books have been published in Canada; books such as *A New Home for Malik* (Steffen, 2003) and *Nana's Cold Days* (Badoe, 2002). Introducing books that depict a range of cultures could prove worthwhile by valuing the culture of many ELLs and by helping them feel included in the resources that are being used as well as in classroom activities. The lack of book resources perceived by the participating teachers could be ameliorated if the librarians or library technicians working in schools informed teachers of relevant materials that would enhance the teaching of ELLs.

Cummins (2000) pointed out that teachers can use multicultural literature to support students' learning and provide varied experiences in their classrooms. In this vein the classroom becomes a venue where students learn to genuinely respect various cultures, linguistically and culturally, and to demonstrate their appreciation and understanding (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Hadaway, 2009; Lamme, Fu, & Lowery, 2004). Culturally relevant books are not confined to nationality or ethnicity but include additional features such as: similarities to the students and their family, experiences in the story familiar to students, familiarity to the student of places in the story, characters of similar age and sex to the reader, and familiar words from their native language. "Culturally relevant books connect to students' lives, not just to their cultural heritage" (Freeman & Freeman, 2003, p. 8).

There are some resources that can be used to assist teachers in working with ELLs such as the use of dual language books[23,24] and Voki.[25] These and similar approaches are being used in research projects that are occurring in cities such as Calgary, Toronto, and Vancouver to support second language learning. Exposure to these projects would help teachers better understand how a first language can be used in learning a second language. All these programs can be used by teachers to help linguistically diverse students develop their literacy skills.

School administrators need to be proactive in recognizing that more students of diverse backgrounds are entering mainstream classrooms. It is important for administrators to develop strategies for involving parents in creating a positive home school connection in order to promote successful educational outcomes for ELLs. One of the challenges found in my study was the low level of language and literacy skills of many ELL parents. This affected ELLs in two major areas: assisting children with homework and volunteering in the classroom. One of the ways this issue can be addressed is by providing parents with the opportunity to become familiar with the school environment. Facilitating and encouraging ELL parents to visit or volunteer in schools would require school

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[23] A dual language book presents the narrative in two languages, usually with English text on one page and the second language on the facing page. Dual language books are designed to be read simultaneously in English and in the second language by one reader (if they know both languages) or by two readers (one fluent in English and one fluent in the other language) working in tandem. For the pilot, guest readers for the second language included students, fellow teachers, parents and community members. http://www.rahatnaqvi.ca/files/pamphlet.pdf

[24] Websites for dual language books: www.rahatnaqvi.ca   www.mantralingua.com

[25] Voki is an educational tool that allows users to create their very own talking character. Website: http//www.voki.com

districts to provide interpreters/translators for teachers who could then serve as a liaison between home and school and also liaise within the school and classroom setting.

The concept of parental involvement held by the participating teachers was based on White middle-class values that are culturally different from immigrant and working-class parents. The lack of understanding of the differences in social outlook affecting parent involvement in the school leads to the misunderstanding that parents are not able to assist their children with school work or participate in the classroom environment. It is necessary to move beyond the deficit model and understand the cultural backgrounds of immigrant families as they relate to teaching and learning (Guo, 2012).

Engaging parents of culturally diverse students in supporting their learning and partnering with teachers in the classroom context can provide a positive relationship to bridge learning and can lead to empowerment among students. Parental engagement can be achieved through the use of specific skills the parents possess that are related to their place of work and their cultural history (Moll & Greenberg, 1992). Thus the parents can take on the role of "teacher" in the eyes of the students. Moll and Greenberg's (1992) seminal study demonstrated how the household histories of the families of the students constituted funds of knowledge that could be used to contribute to classroom learning. In this particular instance they described a classroom in which parents and other community members participated in the students' study of "construction" using

their knowledge and experience. Similarly, Marshall and Toohey (2010)

discussed the "families' stories project" in which grandparents of Punjabi, Hindi,

and Malay cultural background told stories that were then translated into English

to create storybooks. This project enhanced family connections with the school

and acknowledged their input as having value. In this way the parents' funds of

knowledge were integrated into the classroom to support students' learning.

Parents who may feel reluctant to participate in assisting their children in

school need to be encouraged to connect with other parents within their own

cultural community. This would assist them in learning strategies to support their

children by providing social connections. They can also be supported by having

interpreters/translators to help them. It is imperative that administrators and

teachers take the initiative to locate the necessary resources to support parents.

Once a network of supports is established this can help new parents in making

their transition more successfully into the school and community.

The students who arrive from refugee situations, whether they were

previously exposed to school or not, are faced with different degrees of challenges

when trying to assimilate into a new school culture. This is a critical issue in

teaching ELLs and teachers must gain understanding about the additional needs of

these particular students. Understanding the needs of refugee students can be

achieved through collaboration in working with parents, communities, and inter-

agency[26] organizations in providing education for teachers and working with

schools.

Assessment was seen as a challenge for the participating teachers in this

study. The challenge occurred in several ways: as added pressure for ELLs to

perform at an unrealistic level, limited CALP, and difficulty with pencil and paper

tests. This is a critical area because teachers need time to learn about their

students, their backgrounds and academic abilities before they can properly assess

them. ELLs who are required to write standardized tests such as the HLAT and

PAT tests that are potentially culturally biased (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Solórzano,

2008) can have their academic progress hampered. The scores on these tests do

not reflect the true level of knowledge or understanding of the content ELLs are

studying. Engaging in dynamic assessment[27] as opposed to pencil and paper tests

may be a more realistic way to evaluate students' academic growth over a period

of time. It would give students opportunities to demonstrate their learning, as

they are usually better able to articulate their ideas in spoken English than in

writing. In order to do this it will be necessary for school districts and

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[26] For example such agencies as the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) is a community agency that seeks to assist immigrants and refugees coming to the Edmonton area in achieving full participation in the community as well as contributing their experiences and skills to strengthen and enrich the lives of all Canadians.
http://www.emcn.ab.ca/ContactUs/tabid/59/Default.aspx
The Centre for Race and Culture works within the community to promote and support individual, collective, and systemic change to address racism and encourage intercultural understanding. Their expertise spans workplace development, community building, research, and education.
http://www.cfrac.com/about/about-us
[27] "Dynamic Assessment [is]measuring the student's assisted performance during collaboration on a highly challenging learning task to assess what the student is in the process of learning; a measure of the student's potential or emerging development" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996).

government stakeholders to acknowledge this form of assessment. Also, a policy is needed that defers standardized testing until students are able to successfully engage in written methods of assessment. Schools with high populations of ELLs are discriminated against by the ranking system of the Fraser Institute. Deferring standardized tests for ELLs would have the effect of allowing the Fraser Institute to provide a more realistic view of each school's academic successes.

As I was nearing the completion of the writing of this study I had the opportunity to attend the 2013 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Multilingualism (IAM) international conference at the University of Calgary. Jim Cummins, a world-renowned researcher in the field of bilingual education, presented his keynote address on the sociopolitical issues related to teaching diverse students. In his talk, he spoke strongly about the role of government in supporting programs in schools. He posed four questions that have implications consistent with the findings of my study (Cummins, 2013):

1. For politicians and policy makers: To what extent do the educational structures you have put in place provide opportunities for all to develop multilingual competencies and in particular, encourage bilingual students to maintain and develop their home language?

2. For school administrators and teacher educators: To what extent do classroom teachers (including teacher candidates) have access to the knowledge base that already exists regarding how to teach English as an Additional Language (EAL) students effectively.

3. For educators in general: To what extent are school policies proactively

and explicitly encouraging students to develop their linguistic repertoire or

are we implicitly promoting home language loss?

4. For classroom teachers: To what extent and in what ways have my

students engaged in powerful uses of the target language(s) (TL) during

the past month (or term)? Powerful uses of the TL are those that affirm

their identities intellectually, linguistically, or culturally. (IAM 2013

keynote speech).

The four questions listed above highlight Cummins' concerns for

politicians, policy makers, and school administrators to develop their own

understandings of how to effectively address the needs of linguistically and

culturally diverse students. Educators can play a pivotal role in helping students

negotiate their identity by encouraging ELLs to use their first language to support

their academic progress in the milieu of the classroom. Cummins also

emphasized in his presentation an important message: that faculties of education

need to make changes in their teacher preparation programs so that pre-service

teachers develop their knowledge base and skills for teaching diverse students.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) also address similar concerns to those of Cummins in

regard to teaching ELLs when they say "We urge policymakers, educational

researchers, and those who prepare teachers in universities and school districts to

make it a priority to examine the possibilities for achieving a coherent teacher

development continuum for teaching ELLs" (p. 106).

My study has convinced me it is essential for teachers to understand the implications of linguistic and cultural difference among and within students if they are to effectively to teach ELLs. The linguistic and cultural backgrounds that students bring to their schooling are undeniable assets: valued resources that can be drawn upon to facilitate their learning and academic success (Cummins et al., 2006; Marshall & Toohey, 2010). Maintaining a deficit view (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988) of culturally and linguistically diverse students, a view that appears to be prevalent among many educators and policy makers, is no longer acceptable. ELLs must not be denied their linguistic rights to be educated in English but they must also continue to use and honour their first language.

It is imperative that both in-service and pre-service teachers recognize their own biases and/or beliefs when considering culturally and linguistically diverse students. It has been proposed that teacher education programs make a radical move towards challenging White middle class students to think critically about Whiteness and to view the teaching of minority students through the lens of the experiences of those groups (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). These authors advocate that existing assumptions about the representation and practice of multicultural education must be challenged. "It is only when teacher candidates become aware of such issues of power that we can expect our education system to become equitable" (p. 351). This has proven to be difficult and challenging in pre-service teacher education (Carson & Johnston, 2000; Johnston & Bainbridge, 2013).

Globalization brings with it a large number of issues that need to be taken into consideration by the political system. It is not easy to provide immigrants with the support they need to become successful contributing members of their new homeland. The need to provide support to them is not publicly recognized and the political will to provide adequate support is currently minimal. The federal and provincial governments need to be much more proactive and sensitive to the situation of immigrants and especially to those of ELLs in Canada. Government funding cuts to education need to be managed especially carefully in this area. While these cuts have repercussions on teacher education and on the resources and supports that foster academic excellence for all students, they are hitting hardest the cultural and linguistic minority groups who need the greatest degree of support (Roessingh, 2013).

An intensive advocacy effort on the part of school districts, school administrators, teachers, and the academic community is needed if the status quo is to be challenged and educators and linguistic minority students are to be empowered. A vast cultural capital is currently unharnessed in Alberta. Social justice initiatives are essential if Alberta is to build a society in which there are equality and shared economic and cultural benefits for all Albertans: benefits that flow across all sectors of society, immigrant and Canadian born.

It is imperative that in order for the education system to work to the benefit of all Canadians, and specifically for ELLs, then government, university, school boards, teachers, parents, and community partners have to work

collaboratively on a sustained committed level with trust, goodwill, and understanding (Johnston et al., 2009). When research is conducted that addresses specific relevant issues, it must be seriously considered when decisions are made that affect funding, delivery, and administration of the entire system of education. The *Howard Report* (Howard Research & Management Consulting Inc., 2006) was conducted some years ago, yet even today the recommendations have not been addressed, and with recent funding cuts we are even farther from addressing the needs and reaching the goals that were outlined in that report.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although studies have been conducted with respect to culturally diverse students in mainstream classrooms, there are still gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed by research. The participating teachers in my study relied more on practical knowledge gained through professional experience than on the theoretical knowledge gained in their pre-service teacher education programs. Research is needed to examine pre-service teacher education to determine what exposure students receive to educational theory related to ELLs, and if it is deemed deficient, how it might be improved. Research is also needed to explore how pre-service teachers can be taught how to integrate theoretical knowledge into their pedagogy.

The study participants maintained that refugee students form a distinct group within the ELL population; one that presents unique challenges and requires special attention if they are to be successful learners in mainstream

classrooms. Research into the specific needs of refugee students is required. How can the needs of refugee children be addressed in formal school settings in Canada?

There is clearly a need for ongoing research into instructional practices and strategies to develop effective programming for ELLs. A flexible pedagogical approach employing a variety of strategies and incorporating students' culture and language diversity is necessary. Research is needed into a transformation of teacher education programs towards an integrated multicultural approach. Researchers may come up with new pedagogical approaches and possibly even a new theoretical framework that can be useful in teaching ELLs. Engaging in action research could well be the direction for research in the 21st century in this area, as the demographics in mainstream classrooms continue to change.

Research into the best way to assess the progress of ELLs in school is needed. The assessment of ELLs is a difficult task for teachers, especially when those assessments are conducted through pencil and paper tests. There is a need to research the tools by which ELLs can be assessed fairly in order for them to become successful learners.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study reveal a number of actions that need to be taken on several different levels in order to address the current situation facing teachers in mainstream classrooms. First of all there has to be a re-conceptualization of

pre-service teacher education. This would involve changing the curriculum to foster teaching strategies that would help pre-service teachers as they enter the teaching profession. Pre-service teachers are often aware they are not prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds (Guo, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Mujawamariya & Mahrous, 2004). It may be necessary for the academy to consider a fundamental change in all aspects of teacher education programs to encompass a multicultural perspective. As indicated by Ambe (2006), a single course to address multiple factors dealing with diversity and multiculturalism may not be sufficient to provide the necessary educational background for pre-service teachers. Similarly Mujawamariya and Mahrous (2004) and Ladson-Billings (2011) strongly recommend such a re-conceptualization to include multicultural approaches and awareness in all areas of the teacher education program. At the present time with fiscal restraints in post-secondary education, tough decisions will be required of faculty administrators.

Reflections on the Research Journey

Mainstream classroom teachers are facing the complexity of teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. Classrooms today are composed of a mosaic of cultures due to immigration and the globalization of peoples. As a result of my experience as an educator, I believed it was important to study how teachers are dealing with diversity in their classrooms and how they are developing their pedagogy teaching ELLs.

Engaging in this research study proved to be a steep learning curve for me. Through collecting, interpreting, and making sense of the data, I developed a deeper understanding of what the research process entailed. As I reflected on the responses from the participants and their pedagogy during the unfolding of the study, I realized that it was important to help the teachers find a voice for their own experience and accumulated knowledge about teaching ELLs. Through their conversations with me, they also came to a closer understanding of the challenges they faced, and they began to think about their practice in regard to these particular learners and their families. My experiences with the participants helped me to see that the role of mainstream teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms is more complex than I had originally thought. The most crucial problem the participants had in addressing the learning needs of ELLs in their mainstream classrooms was that they did not have the appropriate cultural and linguistic background, nor the relevant resources to do the job effectively.

When decisions are made to cut education programs, the provincial government must look closely at the findings from published research in the field. These findings should form the basis for decision making and should enable more beneficial and effective decision making about educational issues, especially as the immigrant population continues to grow in Alberta.

In conducting this study I have learned how to go about pursuing a research inquiry. I was initially overwhelmed by transcribing the tapes, and then challenged by analyzing the data and writing the dissertation. However, I realize

that going through the process is what brings about change and new knowledge. I can say now that if I was to engage in a research study/project in the future, I have the tools to help me to pursue it more effectively and I can now apply what I have learned. If I were to do this again I would use a similar approach but not limit the study to one particular grade level. I would work with kindergarten to Grade 9 teachers to get a broader perspective. I would also add a focus group at the end of the study to encourage conversation among the teachers, to see if this would add further insights and generate new questions.

It is my hope that this study offers insights that will help teachers who are currently teaching ELLs in mainstream classrooms. This study will assist school administrators to promote and develop current related professional development with respect to teaching diverse students. There is still much more work to be done in the field. I believe I have only touched the tip of the iceberg. I hope that others can build on this work that is vitally important as we move forward in looking at developing new directions in supporting diverse learners in mainstream classrooms. This study highlights how much remains to be done for teachers at the classroom level.

In closing, I think back to Cummins' (2013) comments. He noted in his keynote address that he has been advocating for change to support diversity for 40 years. The same conversation continues up to the present with the message replaying over and over again. What will it take for policymakers, politicians, school districts, and school administrators to initiate change in order to recognize

the particular educational needs of this growing population of students? This

dissertation has the potential to play a significant role in moving this conversation

forward.

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Appendix 1

Introductory Questions

1. Make a timeline of your experience as a teacher. Highlight any special events or successes in your teaching.
2. What artifacts have you collected over the years that have a particular significance to you as a teacher?

Personal Background

1. What is your story or the background information about your teaching experiences? How did you come to be teaching English Language Learners?
2. What is your ELL teaching background? Tell me how it has prepared you to teach ELLs.
3. What earlier experiences or interest encouraged you to teach ELLs?
4. What recollections do you have from your earlier years in school when you were a student - a teacher who may have influenced your decision in any way? What did you think of their teaching techniques? Have you adopted any of these?
5. What times can you think of when you felt comfortable as an ELL teacher in regards to your philosophy and knowledge in this area?
6. What previous experiences can you think of that continue to influence how and what you teach currently? Describe the main or central ideas that help to guide your teaching in your classroom.
7. What cross-cultural experiences have you had? What do you recall of the experience(s)? How does this impact your ELL teaching at the present time?
8. What is your cultural background? Which culture(s) do you identify with? In what way have you changed over the years? How?
9. What else would you like to share about yourself?
10. What beginning experiences have you had as an ELL teacher? What are your experiences like now? What are the differences? How has your pedagogy changed over the years?
11. If you could have anything available to you to be an effective teacher of ELLs what would it be? Why?
12. What professional development do you have access to? How do you find it helpful? How do you integrate the knowledge and skills you acquire into your teaching practice to reach your ELLs?

Appendix 2

Teacher Practice

1. What are some personal anecdotes about your teaching of ELLs?
2. Describe any difficult moments you have had teaching ELLs? What doubts do you have about your current teaching practice?
3. What particular program do you follow when teaching ELLs? What specific criteria do you use in your teaching to help ELLs experience success?
4. What aspects would you change in your practice as an ELL teacher?
5. How many ELLs do you have in your class? What are their cultural backgrounds?
6. Describe the student population in your class.
7. Are the ELLs in your class all day or do you have a special pull-out program?
8. What are some of the challenging working with ELLs?
9. How do you know that ELLs are engaged in the learning activities in your class?
10. How do you respond if the students do not understand the lesson/concept you are trying to teach?
11. What do you find as being the most difficult aspect of teaching ELLs? Why?
12. How does the number of ELLs in your class affect your planning for teaching?
13. Which subjects are more difficult to teach ELLs? Why?
14. What supports do you have in place available to you in helping ELLs?
15. What resources do you have available to you to in teaching ELLs? How effective are they? What specific materials can you request to help you with planning and teaching?
16. If you were going to design a professional development in-service for ELL teachers what would you include and what would you want teachers to take and utilize in their classroom?
17. What are some considerations you keep in mind when you are planning for your class?
18. How do you see your role in the lives of your English Language Learners? What are your goals and how would you go about meeting them?
19. What hopes and aspirations do you have for your ELLs? What are the potential conflicts? How do you think you would deal with these conflicts? How would it affect your teaching?
20. Who do you think should be responsible for the education of English Language Learners?

Appendix 3

Sarah's Classroom Photos

East Wall Alphabet Letter and Leveled Book Bins

East Wall Counter and Sink

Northwest Teacher's Desk

North Wall Guided Reading Table

West Wall Word Wall

South Wall Smart Board and Whiteboard

Appendix 4

Lynette's Classroom Photos

South Wall Bulletin Board Bins with leveled books

South Wall Bulletin Board Number Chart

East Wall Word Wall

East Wall Art Display

East Wall Guided Reading Chart

West Wall Making Word Chart

West Wall Smart Board

Guided Reading Table North

North Wall Storage Cupboard

Appendix 5

April's Classroom Photos

East Wall Cloak Room

East Wall Open Storage

South Wall Smart Board

South Wall Bookcase and Recliner

South Wall Storage

West Wall Making Word Chart

West Wall Whiteboard

North Wall Word Wall

North Wall Writing Samples