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Engaging teachers and students in the multicultural ESL classroom:

A journey

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*** Cover photo by Sahba Sabour

Acknowledgment

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Chapter 1: Background

Vignette

It was a beautiful autumn afternoon in Vancouver. Tired from a full day of work I was stepping on a colorful carpet of red and golden leaves on the way home. Each leaf looked different and had a slightly different color. Yet, it each was beautiful in its own way. And formed an even more beautiful site when seen together in all their glorious contrasts and differences.

I thought of all the people I met since this morning. So far today, I had taught four different classes to almost 5 dozen people coming from different nations around the world. I could only wonder at all the different experiences my students had in their lives before coming to Vancouver, and now here in my class, how they were unified around a common goal: to improve their language skills.

I felt tired, and paused for a moment and looked up. The leaf-covered street seemed to stretch long before my feet, and found myself wondering how long would it take to get to the end. Then I paused and thought about just enjoying the moment. Instead of thinking of the end of the road, I would cherish the moment of standing here, in Nature's beauty.

My thoughts wandered to education, and its nature of joy and hope that has always attracted me to it.

Education is a never-ending road, stretching to endless boundaries in the future. The hope and everyday promises that I spread as an educator and the hopes and promises that I receive as a student is what carries me on in life and takes away the tiredness of the day. Each day holds its own wonder and beauty, and I am enjoying every step of the way.

Background of the topic
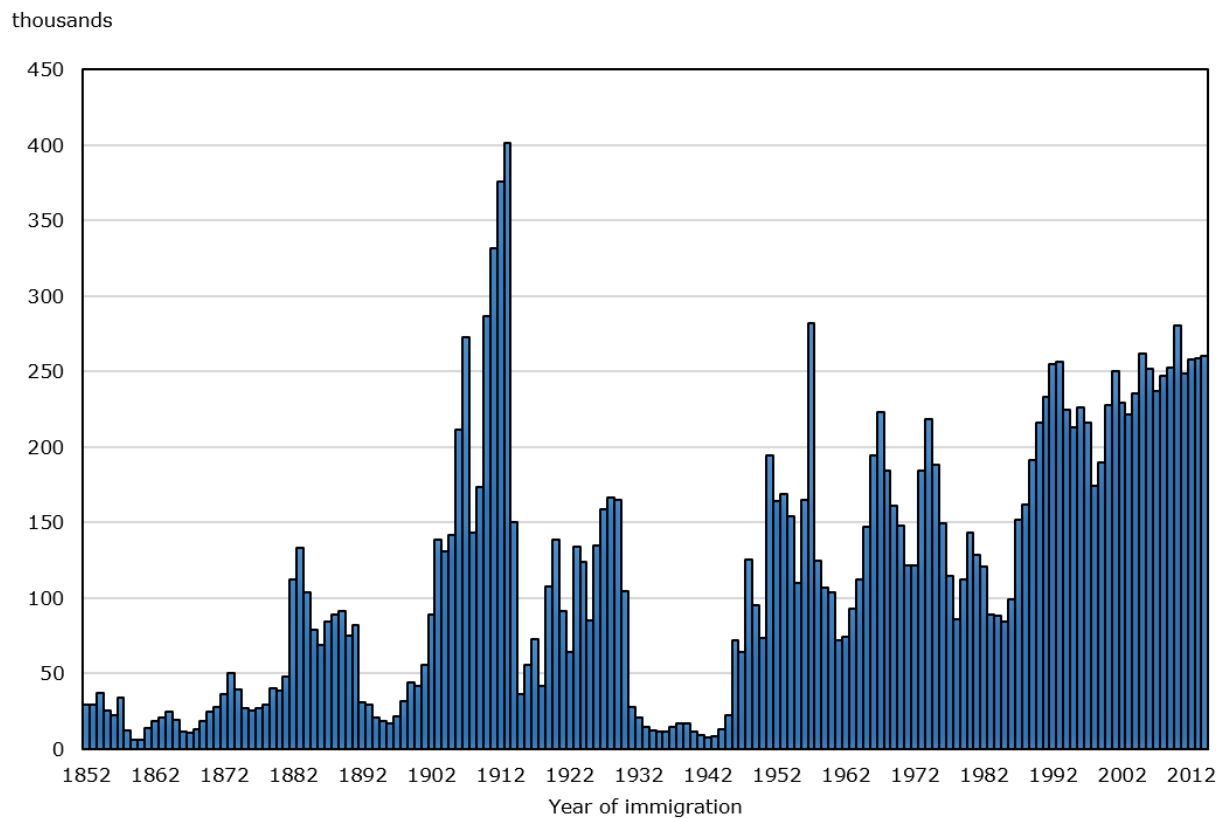
Immigration and immigrants in Canada

Migration has been part of the human story from pre-historic times. "Human migration has

been part of human history for at least 60,000 years, when the first humans migrated out of

Africa. Ancient humans repeated moved around the world"(National Geographic, n.d).These

great migrations eventually led the descendants of a small group of Africans to occupy the

farthest reaches of the Earth." An ancient part of human history, immigration is still a very

modern topic that the world is facing today. Economical, sociocultural, geographical, and

anthropological theories are among the main reasons for migration (Hagen-Zanker, 2008). Also,

at the current time, a growing number of refugees around the world are leaving their homes

due to various unpleasant circumstances in their country of origin. The 1951 United Nations

Convention recognized this process by defining a refugee as "someone who has escaped from

his or her country and cannot go back because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for

reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political

opinion" (Senker, 2008, p.4).

Many countries host people from different nationalities and Canada is a leading host

country.   This multicultural country has always been known as the land of immigrants,

welcoming people from all around the world and valuing diversity. In fact, when Canada

became a country in 1867, the first Prime Minister was an immigrant himself (Government of

Canada Website). According to Census Statistics Canada (2002) "Approximately 5.4 million

Canadians, or 18.4% of the total population, were born outside of the country" (p. 260).

The following chart (Figure 1) shows a history of immigration in Canada up to 2014.

Chart 1
Number of immigrants who landed annually in Canada, 1852 to 2014

thousands

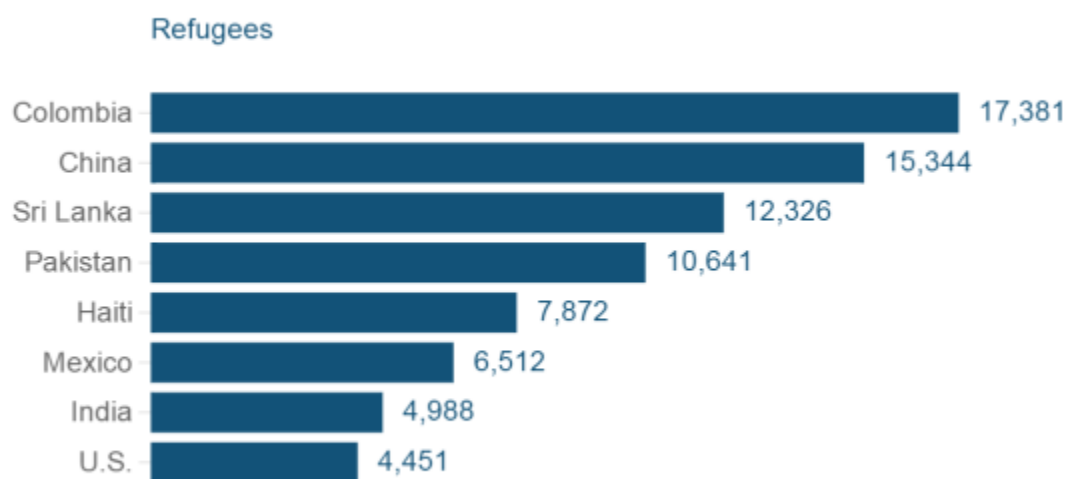**Sources:** From 1852 to 1979—Employment and Immigration Canada, 1982. For 1980—Immigration Statistics, Immigration and Demographic Policy Group, Catalogue no. MP22-1/1980. From 1980 to 2014—Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada.

Figure 1

Furthermore, The Canadian Government Website predicts an increase expectation in the

number of both immigrants and refugees in Canada by the year of 2019 (see Appendix A and B).

Almost all of these immigrants and refugees moving to Canada and other countries

come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Numbers and figures in country of origin of the

refugee and immigrant population differs by year. Figure 2 shows only the refugee population

nationalities from 2003-2013. These numbers and countries dramatically changed in 2014,

shown in figure 3. It can be concluded that a multicultural country such as Canada is hosting a

true mixture of different mother tongues and cultures. The newcomers land in their country of

destination with the need to learn the new language, which in most parts of Canada is English,

as well as adapting to the new culture.

Refugees landed in Canada, plus dependants, 2004-2013

Refugees

Country	Refugees
Colombia	17,381
China	15,344
Sri Lanka	12,326
Pakistan	10,641
Haiti	7,872
Mexico	6,512
India	4,988
U.S.	4,451

CBC News | Made with Chartbuilder   Source: UNHCR

Figure 2

http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canada-refugees-1.3239460

Refugees admitted to Canada, 2014

Refugees

Country	# Refugees
Iraq	2,890
Eritrea	1,725
Iran	1,400
Congo	1,340
Somalia	1,320
Syria	1,290
Afghanistan	1,005
Ethiopia	770

CBC News | Made with Chartbuilder   Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
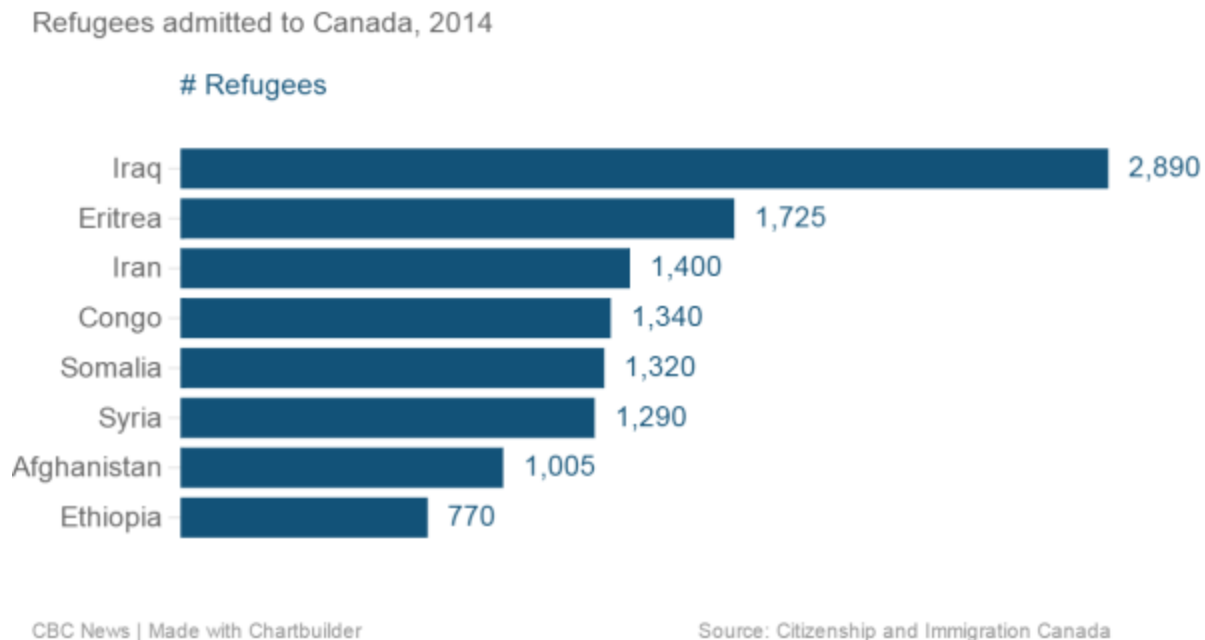
Figure 3

A longitudinal survey on immigration in Canada (Census, 2001) shows many several obstacles in an immigrant's life after moving to a new country and the far most important issue is language learning (The Daily, 2003).

Immigration and language

Communication is a basic human need and the foundation of any kind of social relationship. Clearly, a shared language is necessary to communicate and thus form relationships. In addition, literacy in a host culture enables individuals to relate with their society, and interact on different levels such as commerce and education. Hence, language learning is especially important for all refugees and immigrants. The Census (2001) survey showed only 18% of newcomers to Canada were able to communicate in one of Canada's official languages, English or French. To put this differently, 82% of Canadian newcomers cannot speak an official Canadian language, indicating a wide range of newcomers from lower

levels of native language fluency through more advanced and academic populations of

newcomers.

Fotovatian (2014) pointed out the effect of language on identity and integration of even

the academic and scholarly immigrant population. In her research, she noted how teachers and

scholarly members of the society had become isolated and felt out of context in the new

environment due to their language issue.

Model for ESL

Egan's (2002) learning model may offer clues to the special frustrations of newcomers.

To summarize, Egan shows five kinds of understanding of the world which humans pass

through, moving from one to another from childhood onward. Egan also relates specific

cognitive tools to each of these kinds of understanding. These kinds of understanding are in

order; Somatic, Mythic, Romantic, Philosophic, and Ironic kind of understanding. Normally as

children, we pass through each understanding of the world through first language acquisition

and then when learning other things. While not typically applied to ESL learning, I became

interested in exploring how IE might be applied in the ESL classroom, based on my own ESL

teaching and IE studies.

Adult ESL learners will typically have a Philosophic kind of understanding in their native

language; highly educated immigrants would have an Ironic kind. The problem arises when

their ability to communicate and use the second language is based on cognitive tools reflecting

lower kinds of understanding. I argue that this incongruence between the accustomed kind of

understanding in the native language, and a lower kind of understanding in the second

language is a significant source of frustration, depression, and other emotional issues

newcomers, especially the highly-educated population, face.

Personal Links: My story

As I come from a multicultural background, immigration has a

long history in my family. My great-grandparents were

immigrants from Italy to USA. The ship with my ancestors,

arrived to New York in the late 19th Century. Sandler (1995)

portrayed the enormous challenges that millions of immigrants

had to face and overcome entering the United States

particularly between 1870 and 1920. My great- grandparents, as

all other immigrants in those days with the American dream, faced many of these obstacles,

and learning to speak English was one of the biggest. They had to enter the world of trade and

industry along with overcoming challenges of learning English as a Second Language (ESL). My

grandparents were both born in the United States but coming from Italian families, language

and integrating in the culture still seemed to remain an issue. I remember my 95 year-old

grandfather speaking Italian to me and signing songs in Italian from his childhood in his latest

days of life. My mom told she didn't even know that her father was able to speak and sing in

Italian this fluently. Her amazement that even when so much of his memory had floated off, his

Italian language remained, made me realize the effects and strong impacts of language on a

human being even if they stay hidden for years.

Flash forward, about 80 years later, my mother moves to Iran after marrying my Iranian father. Once again through immigration, learning language and culture becomes a new challenge in my family and the impacts of second language acquisition continues in the family. By the time my sisters and brother and I were ready to go to school, the family was in Iran. My mom learned Farsi through reading nursery rhymes and primary grade readers. We gave ourselves our practice spelling tests! A psychotherapist, my mother immersed herself in the language through seeing Farsi clients, claiming that the nonverbal relationship between client and therapist helped bridge the gap until her Farsi was better. She did have a few embarrassing stories to tell though!

  Throughout my childhood and also adult years of my life, I have always witnessed non-English speakers in different walks of life struggling to learn English as their second language. Learning a way to best help my friends, neighbors, and community to be able to speak English in a way that I was able to do became one of my concerns.

Today I have immigrated with my family to Canada. Although language acquisition is not a challenge for us, I have learned through my personal immigration experience that language is not only a set of words and phonemes managed by some grammatical rules. Language is way more than that. Language is culture. I have been overcoming challenges of adapting to the new host culture I am living in, Canada.

My personal background has put me in a unique place to research about second language acquisition in a multicultural context. Since I started teaching ESL 12 years ago, my passion has always been to find a way to make language learning easy. I have frequently witnessed learners

complain about how challenging and tough it is to learn a new language especially when it comes to areas such as grammar.

Through much reading, investigating ESL teaching methods and taking teaching courses, I have tried to develop and apply new ways of teaching ESL to my learners. Among all methods, the ones I enjoyed the most while implementing them in the classroom, stayed with me and today come naturally in my classroom.

Entering the Imaginative Education (IE) master's program, I found many things making sense to me, as if I were finding a way to put together so many of the puzzle pieces I had been carrying along with myself. As Egan (2002) explained, the first step to a successful teaching and curriculum design and implementation is student and teacher engagement. Studying in the program I came across practical ways to make learning "easier" for my students. I knew learning could be, and in fact must be enjoyable and now I had evidence for it. Once the students are engaged in the topic they would be able to enjoy the process of learning and master the subject matter. Furthermore, Egan explains that the teacher must first locate interest and a sense of wonder and awe in the subject matter, to be able to engage the learners.

My next step was to challenge myself in finding interest and sense of wonder in subjects that probably really didn't interest me as a teacher either, spelling, word tenses and other grammar topics. It was an amazing journey finding myself struggling with some language areas that I had never spent so much time on, to relate to it and eventually discover an interesting

side to that subject. While in my Masters' program, I started applying my new approach to learning in my own ESL classroom and the results never failed to amaze me.

Around the same time that I moved to Canada and started my graduate studies at SFU, I was fortunate enough to connect to a group of Syrian refugee/newcomers arriving at the same time in Vancouver. Through a volunteer program we generated some conversational classes and I became involved in both teaching and curriculum development in the group. This group and other teaching and curriculum design positions gave me a great opportunity to contribute many new findings and teaching methods with newcomers with different levels of English fluency. I learned a lot through many IE based curriculum designs and classroom delivery in this group as well as other ESL classes I have been teaching since.

All of this led to an eagerness to take a further step with this ongoing inquiry in my educational profession and do my action research in the same area. My hope is that through conceptualizing and reflecting on this process, I can get a better sense of the flow of where I have been, where I am right now, and perhaps even a glimpse of the road that lies ahead.

The Learner

Learning English as a second language (ESL) is in high demand. English is the language of business and trades, education, and many other communications around the world. For this reason, many people willingly pursue a course in ESL. In addition to learners who choose to learn English, the current growing population of refugees may have no choice other than to learn English to adapt to their new surroundings. Newcomers have specific characteristics when learning ESL. Many are emotionally sensitive due to being uprooted, especially in the case of

refugees and forced migration. Unprepared for the move, typically their second language level before coming to the host country is low. Yet these adult learners find themselves faced with the challenge of learning the second language to find employment and carry out a viable migration for themselves and their families.

For the ESL teacher, a classroom of adults coming from diverse cultural backgrounds is a fascinating yet challenging phenomenon. Cultural diversity adds to the class as each culture and background has its own unique way of seeing the world. Nevertheless, the mixture of cultural backgrounds, especially given the strong relation of language to culture, brings its own challenges for the teacher.

The issue of engagement

Throughout the 12 years of my own practice in teaching and coordinating ESL classes and through many discussions with colleagues from around the world, I know that the student engagement and motivation is key to successful learning outcomes. Porkaew (2004) found a correlational relationship between student motivation, engagement, and successful second and foreign language learning. In turn, this research showed that interest in the topic stands out among other factors as having the largest impact upon student motivation and engagement. I propose, based on my learning and experience as a teacher, that Imaginative Education (IE) raises interest levels and thus can help motivate and engage multicultural adult ESL learners.

Characteristics of the participants

This action research study investigates how IE can be used to increase engagement and motivation in adult multicultural ESL learners. The study will focus on how IE can best be introduced to ESL teachers in the classroom. First, we will examine why IE is uniquely suited to the need of adult, multicultural, ESL learners by examining these three learner characteristics— adult, multicultural, and ESL student-- and how they relate to IE.

Adult. When learning new material, adults and young learners differ in many ways. In the process of learning, human beings not only learn material, but more importantly, acquire cognitive tools that facilitate learning. The adoption of new cognitive tools is faster and more spontaneous in children than in adults. Children have fewer fixed expectations, tools, and abilities to deal with learning something new. Thus, they are more flexible in adapting to the learning process as presented in the classroom. Adults, however, have already acquired a system of learning through language mastery within their home culture. Thus, in many cases, the teacher must be sensitive to the established learning styles in adults when planning and delivering the lesson. Research shows students with different learning styles gain higher learning outcomes if teaching methods addresses their specific learning preferences (Tulbure,2011). This becomes even more complex when the classroom is composed of adults from various cultures.

Multicultural. The adult ESL classroom presents a special challenge when the adults comprise a multicultural group of learners. Coming from diverse backgrounds, adult learners in the multicultural classroom have acquired ways of learning related to their particular culture.

They bring to the classroom various systems of making sense of something new, or in other words various sets of cognitive tools to help them learn something new. These tools are rooted in their culture and educational system backgrounds. (Vygotsky, 1962)

Egan (1998) shed light on this area, explaining learning styles in terms of the more fundamental concept, "cognitive tools". Cognitive tools are acquired through the culture and assist individuals to better understand their world. Thus, adult students coming from different cultures have different cognitive tool kits that they will apply when learning the new language and culture. The use of multiple tool kits in one classroom presents a challenge to teachers who need to keep all students engaged in the lesson to facilitate optimal learning outcomes.

The relation of culture, pedagogy, and learning further, become evident when considering that there are many approaches to education around the world. Multiple perspectives and attitudes toward education are evidenced even within one nation.   Culture underlies these differences.   To be sure, the word culture has many dimensions and various definitions. From an educational perspective culture has strong ties with language. "In Vygotsky's principal works the word 'culture' is equivalent to the concepts or word meanings existing in that culture" (Van der Veer, 1996, p. 260). Vygotsky also looked at how concepts behind a single word change and expand throughout human development. Thus, one can conclude adults coming from different cultures have different ways of seeing and understanding the world.   In the classroom, these differences present themselves as a wide spectrum of learning styles and interests.

Joy and Kolb (2009) found that dimensions of culture influence learning style preferences. Different factors in the learners' cultural background impact this influence. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1962) demonstrated a strong relation between humans' linguistic tools and the way they think and mentally make sense of the world around them. Van der Veer (1996) argued that in Vygotsky's view, various conceptual systems exist in different cultures and language is a foundation to these systems.

ESL. Learning language, and in particular learning a second language is different from learning other educational topics. Language is not merely a set of words and rules on how to use them. Rather, every language has a culture behind it. Through learning a new language, one is basically learning a new culture. This is even more significant when we employ Vygotsky's concept of culture and see it as related to ways of thinking and conceptualizing. In other words, learning a new culture along with a new language doesn't simply mean learning about new foods, music, or even literature. Learning a new culture relates to learning a new way of thinking.

 Adding to the issues of cultural embeddedness of language for ESL learners, is the problem many have had with previous attempts to learn the second language, attempts which may not have considered culture and cognitive tools, and which may have thus been a negative experience. In many cases, adult ESL learners have some experience in learning English previously when they enter an ESL classroom. The good scenario is when this previous experience in learning English was a good experience. This is not always the case. Egan (2006) discussed the issue of negative experience of learning a language and the resulting frustration.

The ESL learner may bring this negative experience and frustration to the classroom, making motivation and engagement particularly challenging.

In conclusion, adult ESL learners in the multicultural classroom present special challenges to motivation and engagement. The adult learner is unlike the young learner who brings a fresh mind, with little educational experience and with few cognitive tools already formed. To maintain engagement and motivation in the adult ESL multicultural classroom, the teacher must be cognizant of all that these adults bring to the classroom—multiple cultures and sets of cognitive tools, and a motivational mindset that may be based on previous negative learning experience. Thus, special strategies must be undertaken to keep multicultural adult ESL learners engaged in the topic and motivated to learn.

IE as a strategy in the adult ESL multicultural classroom

 Egan (2014) recommended creating wonder in the classroom in order to engage the learners. In his Imaginative Education (IE) theory, Egan stated the importance of student engagement in the topic and portrayed how teachers' engagement and finding a sense of wonder in the topic leads to better student engagement and motivation. This is nowhere more important than in the adult ESL multicultural classroom.

Understanding the importance of imagination and using it in delivering curriculum material is one good step towards classroom success (Judson and Egan, 2013). They further showed how using cognitive tools from different kinds of understanding can help provoke

imagination in second language learning to face the issue of unevenness in learning styles and kinds of understanding.

Fettes (2007) argues that imagination is the element that can truly aid teachers as well as learners in multicultural classrooms. With bringing imagination in the topic and ways of learning, the teacher becomes more engaged and able to make her students more engaged in the topic as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Extensive research has been done on various aspects of ESL learning. The current literature review will focus on those aspects related specifically to the action research undertaken. Specifically, this literature review will examine research on 1) characteristics of immigrant and refugee language learners, 2)the critical importance finding tools to increase motivation and engagement in second language adult learners, 3) and developing teacher training and collaboration to enable educators to create a motivating and engaging learning experience.

The Adult ESL Learner

Newcomers face special challenges when learning a second language. Whether the newcomer has migrated to the host country by choice, or is a refugee who was forced by extreme circumstances to leave the home country, special life pressures are involved that may not be a factor for other ESL students. Johnson and Owen (2013) found that immigrant ESL students drop out of their education for various reasons. These reasons may be the cultural, psychological, and logistic issues that this group of learners are dealing with (Smith, 2011).

 While learning the second language may be of critical importance for newcomer survival and success in the host country, ESL learning is also representative of the overall existential struggle of the newcomer. That is, a newcomer not only changes geographical location, but often moves from one culture to another. Keeping in mind that personal and social identity are culturally imbedded, the immigrant and refugee can be seen to be facing an identity crisis brought on

through cultural change. New personal and social roles must be learned, threatening the established identity security. This is especially stressful in adults who have an established identity and must adjust to a new one, than for children who are still developing their identity and may be more flexible and have less to lose in this regard.

Cultural change, and the possible identity threat that can be incurred by it, are nowhere more evident than in language learning. According to Vygotsky, language is intrinsically related to culture. Learning a new language requires becoming part of a new culture (1962). Warriner (2008) also referred to the relation of language learning to identity issues. While few would doubt that learning the new language, and indeed adapting to a new culture is part of successful transition to a new country, the question is, how do we get there from here? That is, how can immigrant and refugee learners best make the difficult transition from their native to their host language and culture? How can the shock of this transition be minimized so that fewer adult ESL learners drop out, and more successful ESL learning takes place?

Guo (2015) found that most ESL curriculums for immigrants currently focus mainly on the inclusion and adaptation of the immigrants/refugees to the host culture and very little attention is given to the original culture of these people. In terms of Vygotsky's thought, this represents a fundamental mistake. In his view, it is not possible to effectively relate with human beings in any context without considering the notion of their culture. In Vygotsky's work culture is the core of any human related aspect as he "denied the existence of human beings without culture" (Cole & Gajdamaschko, 2007).

One solution, then, to facilitating ESL success in adult learners would be to adopt a learning solution in which the cognitive tools from the native culture is used to foster learning the new culture. In terms of language learning, this can be understood as facilitating Second Language(SL) learning in adults through the use of native cognitive tools. According to Vygotsky (1962), individuals learn through their cultural tools, thus little engagement and sustainable learning will take place without considering the adult ESL learners' culture and first language. For this reason, the particular cultural factors of the adult ESL learner need to be considered in order to facilitate engagement and success in ESL learners.   To better understand how the use of native cognitive tools can engage ESL learners, the role of motivation in ESL learning will be examined.

Tools for Motivation

Research has established the importance of motivation and engagement in producing better earning outcomes in the SL classroom (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). We have also argued for the importance of culturally appropriate tools to engage learners. In this section, we will more closely examine the role of motivation in learning as well as what tools facilitate motivation and learning in the cultural context.

Motivation and engagement are uniquely important for the adult SL learner. Motivation and engagement in the SL have been shown to positively affect the second language(L2) learner's professional skills, and to facilitate such critical job skills as communication and skill maintenance (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). Gardner's (1984) extensive research and models demonstrated a clear relation between motivation/attitude and success in SL classrooms.

Motivation and success have been found to be reciprocally related. That is, being engaged and motivated results in better learning outcomes. Success in meeting learning outcomes leads to a higher level of learning motivations (Porkaew, 2004)

Gardner (1985) investigated motivation in ESL learners for many years. Dornyei (1994) built on Gardner's work, agreeing that, "Motivation is one of the main determinants of second/foreign language achievement" (p.2). Dornyei further suggested analyzing the overall concept of motivation into three components: course specific, teacher specific, and group specific motivational concepts. The current action research deals with all three of these components. (See Chapter 3 for more on this).

Dornyei also called for more emphasis on the cognitive aspects of motivation. He also noted that a new model needed to be developed to apply Gardner's theories to SL learning, one that considered specifically the ESL/EFL environment. Imaginative Education (IE) as discussed by Egan is uniquely suited to respond to Dornyei's concerns. IE conceptualizes learning in terms of kinds of understanding, and proposes specific cognitive tools to facilitate each kind of understanding. These tools can be uniquely useful for application to ESL learning. Figure 4 shows these kinds of understandings and the cognitive tools related to each.
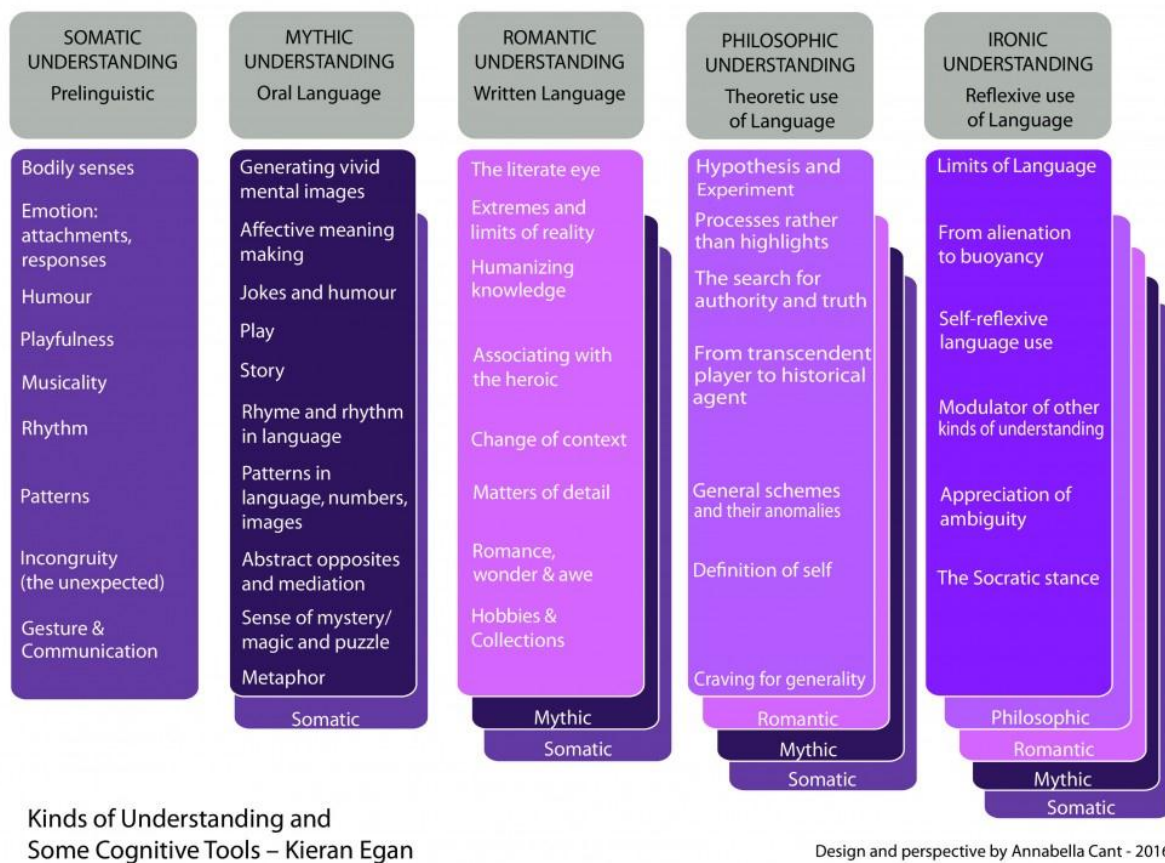
Figure 4

 To understand the alignment between Dornyei's course specific motivation component and IE, we can focus on the 12th of Dornyei's 30 motivational constructs. " Increase the attractiveness of the course content by using authentic materials that are within students' grasp; and unusual and exotic supplementary materials, recordings, and visual" (p.10). Imaginative Education (IE) aligns with this construct as it suggests including culturally sensitive cognitive tools to the course to make it more engaging and thus increasing student motivation. Specifically, Dornyei's mention of authentic material relates to *humanizing knowledge,* a cognitive tool in the Romantic kind of understanding. Dornyei's call for unusual and exotic supplementary materials

are supported by Mythic and Romantic cognitive tools, such as *extremes and limits of reality*, *association with the heroic*, *binary opposites,* and *wonder and awe* (see figure 4).

In addition to the course room component of motivation, Dornyei also referred to teacher specific motivation. Egan agreed that the first step for any learning and knowledge acquisition is to be motivated and interested in the topic. Egan (1998) in fact suggested that even before motivating students, teachers themselves need to find the topic motivating. They must be engaged and interested in what they teach if they are to engage others. Egan demonstrated that wonder can be found in ANY topic and there is a way to humanize each subject providing a way for learners to become emotionally engaged in the topic.

Along with the choosing and designing the curriculum, instructing and delivering the material is of primary importance to student learning. Research showed that different teaching styles have significant impact on the amount of motivation among second language learners (Sheikh & Mahmood, 2014). The motivational attitude of teachers, more than any other educational stakeholder was found to be of prime importance. Likewise, Kubanyiova (2006) pointed out the importance of teacher motivation in classroom success. An inspired teacher is better able to engage the learners and be more successful in creating an engaging environment. Egan (1998) took an IE perspective on the issue of teacher motivation. He noted that the first step in designing an IE curriculum is for the teacher to locate personal wonder in the topic, learning and immersing oneself in the topic to the extent possible.   In Egan's perspective, an engaged teacher is the one who is able to engage the learners.

Enabling Educators to Engage the Adult ESL Learner

Without collaboration and a working relationship between educational experts/theorists and teachers in the classroom, good ideas, strategies, and new teaching methods stay inside the walls of the ivory tower, in research journals, conferences, and theoretical discussions. This not only makes academic study a fruitless effort, but also shortchanges the many teachers who seek professional development and insight. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) suggested a model in educational systems with *collaborative professional development* to eliminate isolation for practicing teachers. Educators can be seen as lifelong learners, and as such need to have ongoing in-service training. This training and knowledge seems more needed when dealing with sensitive groups such as immigrants and refugees.

  Through my professional experience as a teacher, and in the process of the current action research, I have often came across employed or volunteer ESL teachers that were looking for assistance, ideas and better ways of teaching. Many teachers, especially in the ESL sector feel isolated and alone in their career. Through a case study on an ESL teaching group for refugees, Perry and Hart (2012) found even though training backgrounds varied among the ESL teachers, all teachers felt they were not prepared to teach adult refugees. The study showed that "both certified and uncertified educators needed additional support for teaching adult refugee learners" (p.119). In conclusion, Perry and Hart   targeted three areas of action—training, people resources, and support.   Findings indicated that teachers clearly valued sponsorship and mentoring not only to prepare them before they start to teach the refugee learners, but

also to give provide continuous mentoring after they had begun to teach. For this reason, Perry

and Hart (2012) suggested having social networking opportunities for educators to share their

experiences and learn from one another. Galien and Bowcher (2010) examined different areas

of internet educational interactions and found blogs to be highly valuable teacher and teacher

training resources.

My original plan for this action research was to take the role as a teacher and focus on

classroom delivery of material in multicultural ESL context. During my research and review of

the literature, however, and most importantly through the spirals of my experience I ended up

examining the role of curriculum developer/teacher trainer at this time. I understand the

importance of this role, as developing curriculum and training teachers has a much larger

potential impact on teachers, classroom, and ultimately students, than I could have in just

delivering material to a single class.

This interest in teacher training and development in turn led me to look at some new

literature in the context of ESL teacher training and curriculum development. A large scale

research in ESL teaching in 10 different districts in USA showed the need for academic support

and professional development for ESL teachers of immigrant learners (Hanson-Thomas, Richins,

Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2014). Teachers reported they were not prepared or properly trained to

teach language and culture to immigrant students. Actually, according to a study by Eun and

Heining Boynton (2007), those very teachers who experience the need for more training are the

best, most efficient teachers and the ones who benefit most from professional

development(PD) opportunities. Similarly, research on professional development needs of

Hong Kong ESL teachers, showed "well-qualified ESL teachers perceive the need for PD from a broader perspective than their less qualified, less experienced peers who are driven by more immediate needs" (Mak, 2009, p.397). This brings up a further topic--teacher understanding and preparation for professional development, and identifying ways to encourage new ESL teachers to participate in PD activities.   As the spiral of my learning and discovery continues over time, I may pursue this topic as well.

Abbott and Rossiter (2011) investigated professional development (PD) needs, interests and challenges of ESL teachers from both the teacher's and the administrator's perspective. This research was done in different areas in Alberta, Canada with large newcomer intake with distinct needs for ESL education.   The findings show significant need for PD to meet this demand. Having this kind of teacher training and PDs not only benefits the teachers and the educational system, but it also has a direct effect on the immigrant ESL learners. "This in turn will facilitate the integration of immigrants and their families and enhance their participation in the communities where they settle" (p.217). Both this research and the research done by Eun& Heining-Boynton(2007) point out the importance of administration's support for PD ESL training and the need to work with different stakeholders to enhance PD sessions for the teachers. Thus, my journey through the literature on this topic, as well as my own experience as a teacher combined to lead me to a point of doing action research on training teachers to use IE methods to increase their own motivation and engagement, and that of their students.

Chapter 3: Action Research: The journey

My family and I are multilingual and multicultural, with my 3 year old son having learned some Tagalog from his Filipino caretakers while in daycare, Farsi at home, and now English in his preschool. My mom told me tales of how her parents were in no hurry to teach her their native Italian, because they liked to use it to say things "the kids shouldn't hear"! I grew up speaking Farsi and English at home, and after getting a degree in English translation, I began teaching ESL to children of various ages in Iran and the UAE. MY CELTA training really opened my eyes to the inner working of ESL learning and I became eager to learn more about the educational process itself.

Career and Academics Interact

 Prior to beginning my Action Research I had started investigating and monitoring kinds of understandings in my ESL learners and implementing IE ideas and cognitive tools as I started my education with the Cohort. As a newcomer to Canada myself, and not having a permanent teaching position, I got a unique opportunity to implement my findings with several different groups of students from diverse backgrounds and settings.

Within one year I had the opportunity to teach and implement IE in different levels of English learners from pre-literate beginners to advanced learners. I taught business English classes as well an ESL junior program for 8-17 years. I've served at private language schools with international students and in a volunteer program for Syrian refugees in the last year. Along the way I also got the opportunity to work as a curriculum developer and implement the IE

cognitive tools directly in an ESL curriculum. My work has been my learning laboratory and I've enjoyed every minute of it!

I examined different aspects of IE in each setting and the whole journey has been an action research in progress for me. Through applied educational experience I learned and adopted new insights, changing my perspective, teaching methodology and methods as I continued to learn and implement new ideas during my Master's program.

Lost in cultural translation. As I worked with adult ESL learners, I strove to apply my IE learning in the classroom. I remember my first real struggle was to identify the kind of understanding of my adult ESL learners. I reviewed what I had learned about IE. Egan(1998) described how human beings acquire new kinds of understanding as they grow. He relates the Somatic kind of understanding to children before they begin to speak, the Mythic kind of understanding to pre-literate children under school age, and the Romantic kind of understanding to ages around 8-15 years. Then according to the richness of the environment, humans may develop Philosophic and Ironic kinds of understanding. He also pointed out although inevitably we lose some qualities of each kind of understanding when we move to the next, we still relate with previous kinds of understandings and engage with their cognitive tools.

Based on their age, I expected my educated adult ESL learners to have an Ironic kind of understanding and thus I would initially think about implementing Ironic and Philosophic cognitive tools in my ESL lesson plans. Soon I learnt this was not possible! Although many of my learners had a philosophic, if not Ironic kind of understanding, I was frustrated at not being able to find a way to relate to them on this level. Our relations and interactions had to take place

through the powerful tool of language, and that in itself created a barrier. We may have had

shared levels of understanding in our native language, but not in each other's language.   I

sensed that in more ways than one, we did not speak the same language!

Enter Vygotsky. Then along came my Vygotsky course, a turning point in the spiral of

my own development. A critical key that helped open the roadblock to success in teaching adult

ESL learner's was Vygotsky's ideas of the connection and intrinsic relation of thought and

speech. I started to look at the English speech and language of these learners and arrived at an

important discovery: These learners had an incongruence in kinds of understanding. That is,

while they were Ironic and Philosophic thinkers in their own language, as beginning English

learners they naturally utilized the Romantic, Mythic, and sometimes even Somatic kind of

understanding. To reach these learners I would have to engage in more basic kinds of

understandings such as using Mythic related cognitive tools.

This was easier said than done. I quickly found that teaching adult learners using Mythic

cognitive tools was quite different from teaching children with these cognitive tools. And the

difference was not only in the biological age, but actually in the fact that these learners had a

more totally different kind of understanding of the world, that is they had a higher

developmental thought function. So, I needed to modify the lessons somehow that it would

engage the learners using the available cognitive tools in their second language, yet still respect

the kind of understanding they had in their native language. Having different kinds of

understanding in different languages and the different thinking system, wasn't something that

IE directly emphasized. I realized I had a unique teaching situation. It was up to me to read, ask

and research about this. My supervisor encouraged me to take this path, saying that I had

found my niche.

Language and thought: The lady on the train. While I was entering this new,

untrodden path, I had an enlightening conversation with Carla, a friend from my Imaginative

Education Cohort. We often spoke together on the long train ride to the university campus, our

own informal classroom. One day, she shared with me her experience of learning French as a

second language. Hers was also a case of immigration and immersion in a second language. She

had moved to France with minimal French language knowledge and picked up the language by

immersing in the culture and society. After Carla had been in France for about a year, her sister

visited her there. As was their habit, her sister started discussing current political and social

issues. For the first time, Carla found it difficult to relate to what her sister was discussing.

Aghast, she blurted out,   "I have stopped thinking in the last year!"

  By "thinking" Carla was referring to her previous customary use of Philosophic and Ironic

kinds of understanding. As she could not exercise these kinds of understanding due to her

language limitations in her second language, she had to use more Mythic and Romantic kinds of

understanding. She had tuned her mind to these kinds of understanding when learning words

and sentences to relate with her new community and deal with day-to-day issues. After

speaking with her sister, she realized she felt estranged from the Philosophic and Ironic kinds of

understanding, or as she put it, that she had stopped thinking!

 Carla's experience mirrored that of my adult ESL learners, and confirmed my own hypothesis.

My adult learners were thinking through their Mythic and Romantic kind of understanding in

English, while capable of using different kinds of understanding in their native language and
system of thought.

Cultural embeddedness of language: The concept of learning. My first attempt
to deal with this incongruence was to bring a mixture of cognitive tools to the classroom.   At
that time, I was teaching a group of Syrian refugee/newcomer women. I designed the lessons in
a way that each unit was rich in Mythic and Romantic cognitive tools, contained some Somatic
tools and also in few instances a couple of Philosophic cognitive tools. I hoped that through
spreading out this cognitive tool buffet, I could come up with something to engage everyone.
This time things went better. I felt learners were becoming more involved and engaged with
activities and the lesson materials. In addition, I noticed this engagement had led to better
learning outcomes. They were more successfully using vocabulary and language skills I was
aiming for in the curriculum. But then came the next challenge.

While I felt right on target in teaching these students, it turned out that in terms of their
educational experience in learning a second language, I was still off the mark. Once more, I
wasn't speaking their language! Specifically, "learning and education" meant something
different to them than it did to me. They brought their own concepts of what education should
be like, as experienced in their own culture. They did not recognize what we were doing in the
classroom, with the various Mythic, Romantic, and Somatic tools, to represent learning.

Here's how I found that out. After a few sessions, which from my point of view had been
successful, a couple of students came to me with a concern. They reported that they were

really enjoying the new class routine and activities, yet, as it is difficult for them to arrange for attending the class given their family circumstances, leaving younger children behind, etc, they would like to focus more on real learning, rather than just having fun! I saw that we did not have a shared meaning of the phrase "real learning", and following Vygotsky I realized that the difference was culturally imbedded.

 The typical signs and tools of "real learning" as they understood it, were not evident in the classroom. Copying material by hand, using worksheets, and written assignments were replaced with imaginative and sometime playful activities, using specific, carefully planned cognitive tools.   The issue was although they were engaged, and their language skills were also growing, they didn't feel they were learning, because these activities did not fit with their culturally embedded notion of learning.

  Indeed, the use of Imaginative Education, of tools that engage the imagination of the learner through different kinds of understanding often stands in the face of more structured, traditional educational systems in many cultures, whether East or West or somewhere in-between. When the educational and legislative culture favors a test performance measure of learning, and success can be measured through brutally competitive college entrance exams, few schools or educators, few communities or students are willing to spend time and money on methods and approaches that might not align with such traditional assessment measures. For their own professional security and to help their students achieve the test scores that define success, teachers in such situations may tend to "teach to the exam", and necessarily dominate the class voice with instruction and discussion. Creativity, self-reflection, and student autonomy

are not commonly practiced. The main question students ask about a topic is "Will this be on

the exam?"

I can relate to that. The school system in which I myself studied, beginning in primary

school over 25 year ago, where the language in which I had to study was actually my second

language, was quite traditional. While things may have changed now, in those days we had

copy books in which we had to write our language lessons repeatedly, poems to be memorized

but never created, and history books that had to be recounted word for word with no analysis.

My mother, an educator in her own right, had many a wrangle with my elementary school

principle. "She got it right the first time. How does it help to write it again and again?" We were

finally able to work out a compromise—no rote copying, but also no speaking up in the

classroom. We wore down the school administration through smiles and stubbornness, but

that's another story for another time!   The point here is, that my own educational journey

prepared me to totally grasp the perspective of my students. Compared to what they were

used to, this was no way to run a classroom!

 Fast forward from my elementary to graduate years. After years in such a system, my own

voice had atrophied. I had come to think that education meant successfully repeating what I

learned. Confusion reigned when I had assignments asking me to reflect on my personal

thoughts about major theories in education and even critique them. Frankly, up to that point I

hadn't ever critiqued a theory and wasn't sure how to do that. In my way of learning, I would

study, learn, summarize, then apply or give a test on my understanding of the concept. So there

started my struggle.

My first semester happened to be a virtual experience. While I was glad begin graduate studies, I did miss out on having the works and thoughts of fellow students as an example or reference for learning.   I remember my first semester as the most difficult semester and my first assignments the most difficult assignments in the process of my Masters' program. Further on in the program, after obtaining a deeper understanding of education through learning about IE and Vyotsky's ideas I am better able to understand the source of my confusion and frustration, and even apply this to my students' experience.

Now I recognize my difficulties as having been rooted in the process of adapting totally different cultural tools, and even in learning new concepts about what it meant to learn.   I wasn't only learning the subject matters, theories, and philosophies of Education, I was also learning how to think in a new culture and to use new cognitive tools to do so. My first use of imagery to reflect on major educational philosophies was a true struggle with ambiguity, uncertainty, and oddness.

For example, I had an assignment in which I was to read articles about Rousseau, Plato, and Durkheim's educational perspectives and draw an image to reflect their philosophy of education. I was totally lost. Reading the papers took me a couple of hours. Making the images, on the other hand took me several days. I wasn't comfortable doing it. I simply didn't know how to put thoughts into images. See figure 5.
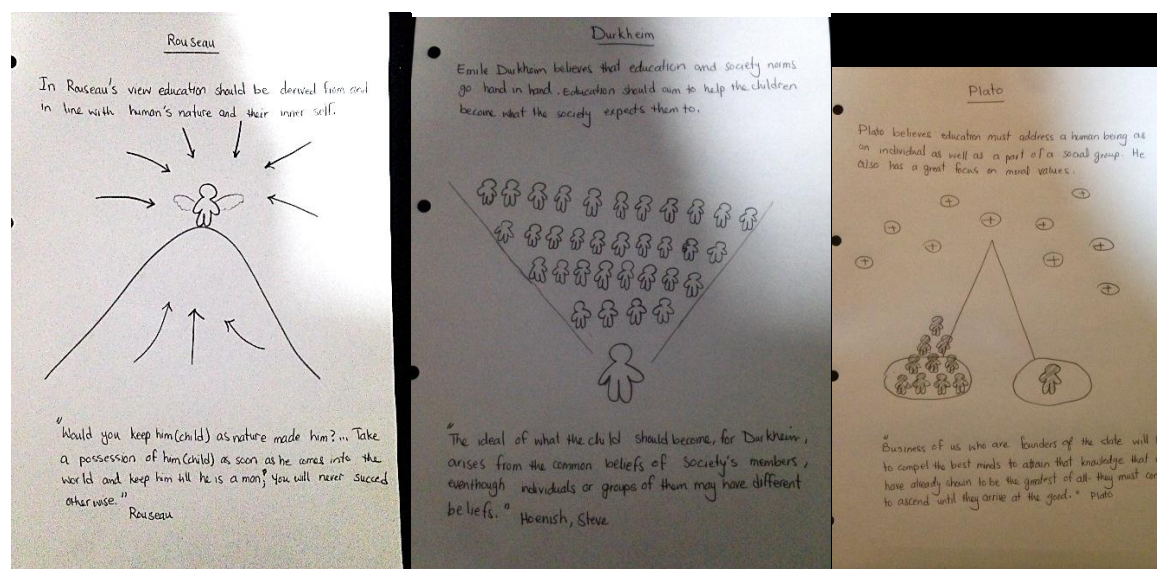
Figure 5

Adding to my confusion and threatening my self-confidence, the first few written assignment I sent in to my instructor would come back with comments in red! Criticism of any kind, even instructive feedback, made me feel that I just wasn't getting it. Looking back on those assignments and comments I can see most of the comments were aimed at encouraging me to include my personal thoughts.

After sharing some ideas, pointing out an issue, or giving a different perspective, my instructor would ask what do you think? I would go back to the original text, spend a long time re-reading them. Then I would edit/ change the commented parts, adopting any changes recommended and resend the assignment. The assignment would soon bounce back with more comments in red, as I kept leaving out one critical element—my own opinion and reflection. Seldom exercised before in an educational situation, my own voice was elusive.   Half way

through the first semester I was confused, frustrated, and struggling. For me, through my

cultural lens, all of these repeated red comments meant I definitely wasn't doing well. Still

unable to conceptualize learning as individual thought and reflection, I was panicking! I felt

from my situation was that either I was not understanding the content or I didn't really know

how to study!

With the confusion and frustration of those early days now long in the past, I see that

my instructor was challenging me to think and reflect on my thoughts to better understand the

subject, rather than just repeating the ideas in the article and summarizing it. She was giving

me the opportunity for independent thought and reflection, something utterly unexpected and

a bit outside my comfort zone at the time. As she patiently explained to me when replying to

an email I wrote while freaking out over the comments, her job was to give me feedback on my

work and help me with reflecting and analyzing what I study. Her persistent nudging finally did

pay off.

From my current perspective, I realize that although we were both speaking English we

weren't speaking the same language! There was a cultural barrier that did not allow us to have

a shared perception of learning. My perception of learning was different from hers. To put it in

IE terms, my kind of understanding about education was different from hers. And as Vygotskian

theory would later show me, this was related to the cultural embeddedness of cognition and

language. My professors were to be both patient and persistent, supporting my fledgling efforts

to develop my own voice.

Back to the present. Based on this experience, when my students told me they needed more learning rather than just having fun, I exactly knew what they meant. I started incorporating and mixing different learning styles, keeping culturally familiar styles and slowly introducing new ways of learning. This solution, however, was not as straightforward as it might sound. Many great, available activities for ESL learning were hard to adapt to other kinds of understandings. Besides, studying, learning, and living in a new culture does require one to learn the cognitive tools of the host culture. My students and I moved forward into an unknown land, as I developed cognitive tools to help navigate this new frontier.

My insights into the importance of culture in learning increased when a few months later, I was charged with teaching a different cultural group. My new class was composed of learners from Asian and from Latin American cultural backgrounds. Although their level of language learning was the same as that of the Syrian newcomers I had been working with, I had to develop a new set of cognitive tools to engage their kinds of understanding. The lessons I had developed using culturally related cognitive tools to engage learners in the first group did not equally engage the next group, culturally different from the first.

The difference between the two groups, what my tools needed to be sensitive to, was not the language accuracy levels. Rather, the cultural difference between the groups carried a mandate for new learning tools. I was facing the issue of a multicultural classroom and unevenness of cognitive tools and learning styles. That was when I thought, "I wish there were a set of cognitive tools described for different cultural backgrounds with respect to their educational philosophy, with respect to the meaning that education carried within their culture".

   While faced with this professional dilemma, I was also supported through my education to develop modes of inquiry to find solutions. I wrote a paper that pulled together all the puzzle pieces I had been gathering—ESL, adult learning, culture, IE, and Vygotsky. With the encouragement and support of my program chair I prepared a paper on how Vygotskian perspectives and IE can integrate to help multicultural ESL learners through the use of their cultural cognitive tools as mediators in the classroom. http://summit.sfu.ca/item/16722

Action Research Begins

In the long run, my goal is to conduct research on different cognitive tools and patterns of thought and learning in different cultures to aid newcomers learning ESL in a host country. My initial focus was to investigate the effectiveness of IE related cognitive tools in the ESL classroom through my action research. I had personally witnessed this success. To make this point within the scholarly community and to make sure I was moving in the right direction, however, I first needed to do solid research in the literature, and gather foundational data showing the effectiveness of IE cognitive tools in ESL classrooms in general. My original plan was to carry out my action research in one of my classes.

At the time, I was a substitute ESL teacher, at a private language school with no fixed class to teach in. Additionally, I was interested in undertaking my research with the immigrant/refugee population rather than language college students, as the cultural dynamics of the two are quite different. This did not discourage me. Throughout my educational and professional journey, I have discovered that things will work out as they are meant to. Patience, perseverance, and a positive attitude have been my companions all the while.

Sure enough, a door of opportunity opened for me to do my research with the Language Instructions for Newcomers in Canada (LINC) program. There were several steps to take, however, much paperwork and bureaucratic requirements to get IRB approval to work with human participants, to ensure the ethical nature of my study. These steps might take up much of my precious remaining time in the program. The clock was ticking.

A change of direction. With a flexibility born of necessity throughout my learning process, I changed and adapted my original plans, until I eventually assumed the research role of curriculum developer and observer in the classroom. That is, I would investigate something that had actually long been an interest of mine, how can we best bring IE cognitive tools to teachers to help them engage ESL learners. I met Dionne Wilkinson, a great teacher in the LINC program. She kindly accepted having me in her classroom and was highly motivated to work with me in this project. As Dionne put it, she saw this project as a kind of Professional Development (PD) for her work.

I would work closely with Dionne, developing IE based lessons for her morning classes, and observing those classes. I would give feedback to Dionne, and we could devise ways for the delivery to be more successful in her afternoon classes.

The research setting

Dionne's morning class was a LINC level 5 class consisting of 10 adult South Asian students from China/Hong Kong and Vietnam who had immigrated to Canada. Only 2 students were males and the other 8 were female students. The classes met in a neighborhood church with childcare provided next door to the class. Classes met every day, 9-12, with a 20 minute

break in the middle. Starting at 9 gave the learners enough time to drop off their older children at school and bring the younger ones to be looked after in the daycare. Students would normally sit around 2 round tables and interacted during different activities. They seemed motivated and eager to participate in classroom discussions.

Dionne introduced me and took a few minutes to explain to the class the reason I would attend their class for some time, what I was researching, and what I would be observing. Next, I had a friendly chat with the class and told them a bit more about myself and my educational and cultural background. They all welcomed me in their class warmly. In fact, they were all excited to learn about the new activities I was going to bring to the class.

Creating the activities. After changing direction in my research, I was left with a very short time to attend the class. As a result, only one unit of the course remained in which I could implement activities. The topic of the lesson was technology. The class followed its usual routine and the teacher continued with her plan and time schedule as needed for her class including pre-planned assessment, etc. I suggested some activities based on cognitive tools and within the class plan, Dionne would include these activities wherever possible.

Dionne instructed the class herself, while I took the role of observer, taking notes at a side table. I did occasionally address the class with a specific IE activity and walked around the class at times to closely monitor how activities were being performed. Student activity didn't seem to be disrupted by my presence. They carried on their activities with the same level of participation whether I was at their table or not. When they were stuck in an activity, they would ask their teacher. During mid-class breaks or after class I would get a chance to have

short discussions with a student. My main goals in this were to build a positive relation with the students and to get feedback on the work being done.

Dionne had walked me through what areas had been covered in the unit and the vocabulary and language structures that had been taught. She was quite flexible with receiving ideas for her lesson from me. So, I included some cognitive tools and was careful not to overuse the tools. This was something that I had to be cautious to avoid. I was tempted to use so many activities but my time was limited and to include all I wanted, would cause an artificial environment with no meaningful structure to carry the story along. So, I limited the activities to the following:

Kind of understanding	Cognitive tool	Activity
Somatic	Gesture and Communication	Charades
Mythic	Jokes and humour	
Mythic	Sense of Mystery and puzzle	matching
Somatic	Playfulness	vocabulary
Mythic	Rhyme and pattern in language	the rhyming words
Romantic	Humanizing knowledge	the reading
Romantic	Sense of Awe	worksheet
	Extremes and limits of reality	

Figure 6

IE in action

 Charades. The first day of implementing IE went great. We started off with the Charades

activity. In this activity, I was aiming to primarily use the Somatic kind of understanding of the

learners through the Gesture and Communication cognitive tool. Charades also involved and engaged the students on a Mythic kind of understanding level through the cognitive tool of joke and humor that is part of Charades. In my experience, Charades is a great activity for adults from various cultural backgrounds, and with various kinds of understanding. While it does engage students in basic kinds of understanding such as Somatic and Mythic, it does so without the classroom devolving into a childish atmosphere. What students aim to do in this activity is to come up with one word and through this guessing much other related language is automatically used. As there is a great playful and humorous side to this activity, it is quite engaging and spontaneous.

A list of topic related words, of sixteen, were printed out and cut up. Each student would take a card and act out the word. Guessing would go on until someone would figure out the correct word. I had used many of the vocabulary and phrasal verbs they had previously learnt in the lesson. So, it made a great review, recall, and use of newly learnt vocabulary.

turn on	look up	print out	plug in
click on	shut down	WIFI	desktop
internet password	mouse	monitor	texting
virus	video call	audio call	keyboard

Figure 7

This activity went great. Students were fully engaged and the use of vocabulary and language related to the topic was high.

After class, when Dionne was giving me her feedback, she mentioned she liked the fact to start the class with an engaging and stimulating activity like this. The concept of the game Charades and guessing a word was quite familiar to the students. They needed limited instruction; even the latecomers would immediately join in, eager to participate without needing clarification for the activity. This showed me that they had a cultural understanding of the game. Dionne also appreciated the fact that students were using a wide variety of words and topic related

language other than just the 16 words on the cards. They were spontaneously using the target

language with no instruction from the teacher.

Vocabulary puzzle. The next activity was the matching vocabulary puzzle. In this

activity I had tried to primarily use the Mythic kind of understanding of the students through

the cognitive tool of Mystery and Puzzle. It also had some Somatic understanding through the

tool of playfulness.

This was a group activity with two parts. In part one each group would receive an image chart

and a set of cards new words to match with the images. The new words here were extracted

from the reading text I had designed for them to study later in the unit. So, this was a pre-
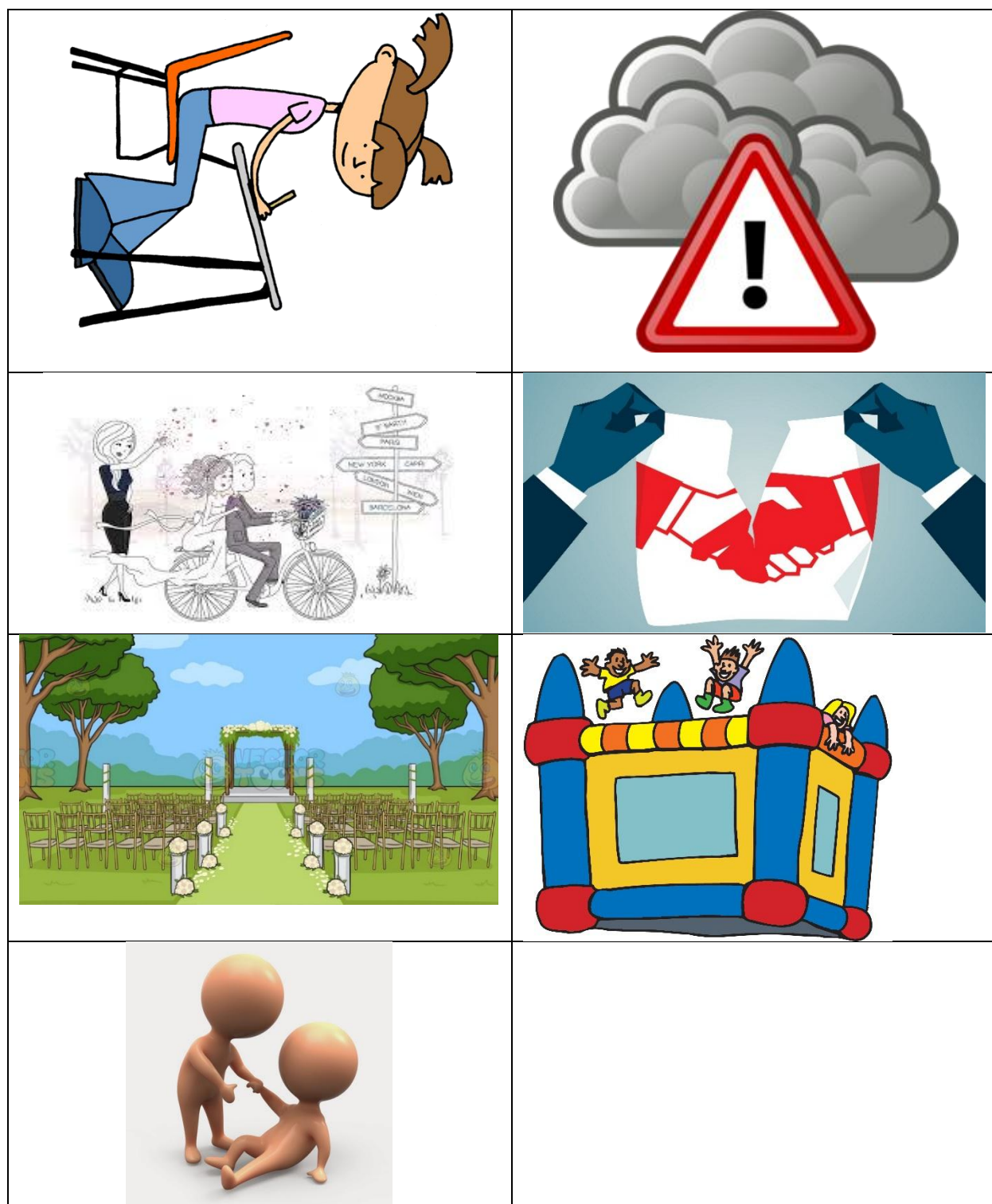
reading, vocabulary activity.

Image chart

Figure 8

Vocabulary cards

cyber-bullying	Altruistic	bouncy houses
host a wedding	back out	wedding planner
drastic	Diligently	show up
incident	camaraderie	gaming sessions
trash talking	Suicide	phishing

Figure 9

Cards in figure 9 were cut up and each group received a set of cards and a copy of the image chart in figure 8, to match up.

In this group activity, many conversations took place when students were helping one another try to figure out the matching cards. This showed their engagement. They would be louder or go completely silent at different times. There was a lot of guessing, doubting and rearranging, but they were engaged all along. They were thinking and eager to solve the puzzle and finish the activity kept everyone focused on task. See figure 10.

Figure 10

Part 2 in the Activity was a list of definitions to go with each set of matched word/image. See

figure 11.

Match each word with the correct definition.

1. showing a disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others; unselfish
2. when a child or teenager is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by someone else on the Internet, digital technologies, or mobile phones
3. a large plastic structure, usually in the shape of a building, that is filled with air and that children can jump up and down on for fun
4. planning and throwing a wedding ceremony in a specific area
5. withdraw from a commitment
6. someone who plans and organizes weddings as a profession
7. likely to have a strong effect; radical and extreme
8. in a way that shows care and conscientiousness in one's work or duties
9. arrive at a specific place
10. an event or occurrence
11. mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together
12. times scheduled to play digital games with friends
13. Insulting speech intended to intimidate or humiliate someone, especially an opponent in a game contest
14. the act of intentionally causing one's own death
15. an attempt to others obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details illegally

Figure 11

Now things made somewhat better sense. They had definitions to give them a sense of security on the meaning of the guessed vocabulary and images. As much as they were still engaged in the activity, I was glad that I had planned the definitions to follow the images not the way around. Having definitions in sentences, had clearly given a new shift to their activity. They were using higher cognitive tools.

They were now stuck in focusing on how to pronounce the written words and paying less attention to the word meaning. Thus, the conversations among them slowed down and now they were less freely using spontaneous words. Also, they might have been overwhelmed with words they weren't sure of the definition box or didn't know how to say. I felt some of the engagement they had when they were matching an image with only one word, was gone. I related this with the unavoidable loss that Egan (1998) mentions when moving from one kind of understanding to another.

The rhyming activity. This activity was a success as well. From the way the students carried this out, I put together some tips for myself   how to adjust the activity for future. Targeting the students' Mythic kind of understanding, I had used the cognitive tool of Rhyme and Rhythm in Language in this activity. Students were given a worksheet with some words from the lesson and were asked to add rhyming words under each column. See figure 12.

In groups find as many rhyming words for each vocabulary. One example is done for you.

Cyber	Bouncy	Planner	wedding
-diver - - -			

drastic	Host	incident	show

Figure 12

Dionne explained the concept of rhyme to the class and provided them with a few examples. This activity was also a group activity. Yet, each student received a worksheet to write in, so each would be able to keep the paper as a reference.

Interestingly, the concept of rhyme was not familiar to the students. They would suggest words that would not rhyme in the first place and it took Dionne quite some time to do error corrections. The first guesses were random. For planner, they suggested words such as plane or planet. After some clarification, they were closer. Someone suggested walking to rhyme with the word wedding.

Dionne pointed to the syllables in each word and how the tone and music should be the same in rhyming words. She also pointed out the vowel sound. Students were focused and were trying to figure out the pattern. Once they got a hang of how rhymes work, they started enjoying the activity and were eager to find words and try out their guesses. They were doing a very good pronunciation practice, trying out different pronunciation for words they knew. In a fun way, their awareness of their own pronunciation of words and of the proper pronunciation increased.

After class a student reported to me that she had really enjoyed the rhyming activity and now it was much easier for her to remember the pronunciation of these new words as she associated them with words she previously knew by heart. Her examples were learning how to pronounce drastic when thinking of plastic, and the association of the new word incident with the commonly used, more familiar word, accident.

What I thought could have been better in this activity was to give the students a long list of words to find rhymes from. At points, I felt they were struggling to find words they knew and that would rhyme. This struggle and frustration would sometimes cause discouragement, along with a drop in motivation and engagement. So I thought if I had given them a long random list of words with rhyming options matching to the worksheet, then they would be able to focus more on pronunciation and syllable rules itself rather than spending time just to recall words. Dionne, also agreed with this thought and later in a feedback report that she sent me, she mentioned that although she liked this activity and intended to use it in her classrooms in the future, she would also give a list of words to the students to choose from.

Reading text. The final activity that I had included in this unit was the reading. To engage the students' Romantic kind of understanding I chose a reading that would have a *wonder*-full aspect to it. The reading was about ways that internet benefits us.

To engage the students' Romantic kind of understanding I chose a reading topic that would have some Extremes of Reality and Wonder and Awe. The topic was about extreme ways that internet has helped people and included 6 surprising true stories, of people's weddings being rescued and even lives being saved. This activity had a strong Humanizing cognitive tool from the Romantic kind of understanding as well. After the reading, Dionne reported an interest in the topic. She told me that she had started this unit asking the students to list advantages and disadvantages of the internet. According to her, students had lots to say for the disadvantages, and the advantages included day to day things such as keeping in touch, on line

banking, and taking online courses. So, realization of such extreme benefits of the internet was quite an engaging idea.

This text was used as an assignment reading activity with a set of questions related to comprehension, detail, and gist. (see Appendix C)

Students' performance in the test was quite good. The test results were not related solely to the reading exercise, but also demonstrated positive learning outcomes for the vocabulary activity leading up to the reading. Overall, the purpose of these classroom interventions were not to increase one skill or another. The purpose was to gauge how implementing cognitive tools in multicultural classroom can enhance student engagement. And in that regard, the experiment was a success. Through my teaching experience leading up to this study, and through the action research itself, I have found that IE tools can indeed increase motivation and success in adult ESL learning in the multicultural classroom, as long as the tools were congruent with the learner's kind of understanding and sensitive to cultural background. Motivation and engagement in the lesson are the first key to educational success.

Research methods and findings

This research used qualitative methods, such as descriptions, one teacher case study, and open ended questionnaires to gather and analyze data. A content analysis of the open-ended questionnaire completed by the teacher showed the emergence of several key themes.

- Usefulness of IE material and techniques: They worked together…more engaging than just using words…able to understand better…engaging for learners of all backgrounds and learning styles.

- Teacher engagement and creativity: I changed it (using words for the next activity to make it) more challenging and produce more competition…I'd include more stories, groundbreaking news…like to dive into the links provide… thinking of different ways we can have more play and physicality

- Teacher training needs: clearer understanding of activity objectives, ProD webinar…face to face workshop… more activity examples…immediate support and feedback…IE educator presents first, teacher follows the example…meeting with other teachers who are IE trained…available materials to cut down on prep time

Dionne's comments clearly show that she found the IE classroom interventions increased engagement in her students. She herself was also engaged, as shown in her creative thoughts about what activities could be included and her eagerness to adapt the activities for her students. Dionne valued the training, but had several suggestions for training improvement. The overarching suggestion was to have IE training part of an ongoing ProD program. Specific requests were for demonstrations for IE practitioners, available activities, and networking opportunities with other IE teachers.

Personal Findings. My initial research plan was to explore how IE tools in the classroom could increase student engagement and thus support student ESL learning success. During the course of the research, another goal emerged, which was to explore how IE coaching and collaboration with teachers might make IE a more widely adopted learning approach. I realized

that IE needs to scaled to meet the needs of the larger teaching community. It is not enough

for me, one individual teacher, to bring these tools to her learners. More important is to

explore ways to bring IE awareness and practice to teachers.

As such, this was a first exploration how to implement Professional Development of IE.

Some approaches used here were teacher coaching and collaboration, curriculum planning

parallel to the teacher's in-progress plans, mentoring, and offering teacher and occasionally

student support. An important part of the research findings was the importance of teacher and

student feedback to the process. This feedback loop—presentation, feedback, alterations,

feedback—needs to be present not just as a research tool, but as a live, ongoing facet of IE

training and implementation. That is, trainers and teachers need to be constantly aware of

"what works" and "what doesn't" and have a deep bench of cognitive tools from which to draw

on to engage students. They need to be keen in their observations, and nimble in adjusting

plans to suit the kinds of understanding, learning abilities, and cultural backgrounds of their

students.

In fact, as I look at my own personal journey, through my education, career, and

research endeavors, I see these same factors have been key to the journey. I have prepared

myself with degrees and knowledge, put these into practice in the classroom. Observing and

experiencing many trends, feedback, outcomes, and new signposts, I have adjusted, expanded,

and even changed course. I expect that, despite what one of my professors said about "finding

my niche", I will continue on this journey, experiencing new opportunities and discovering new

frontiers.

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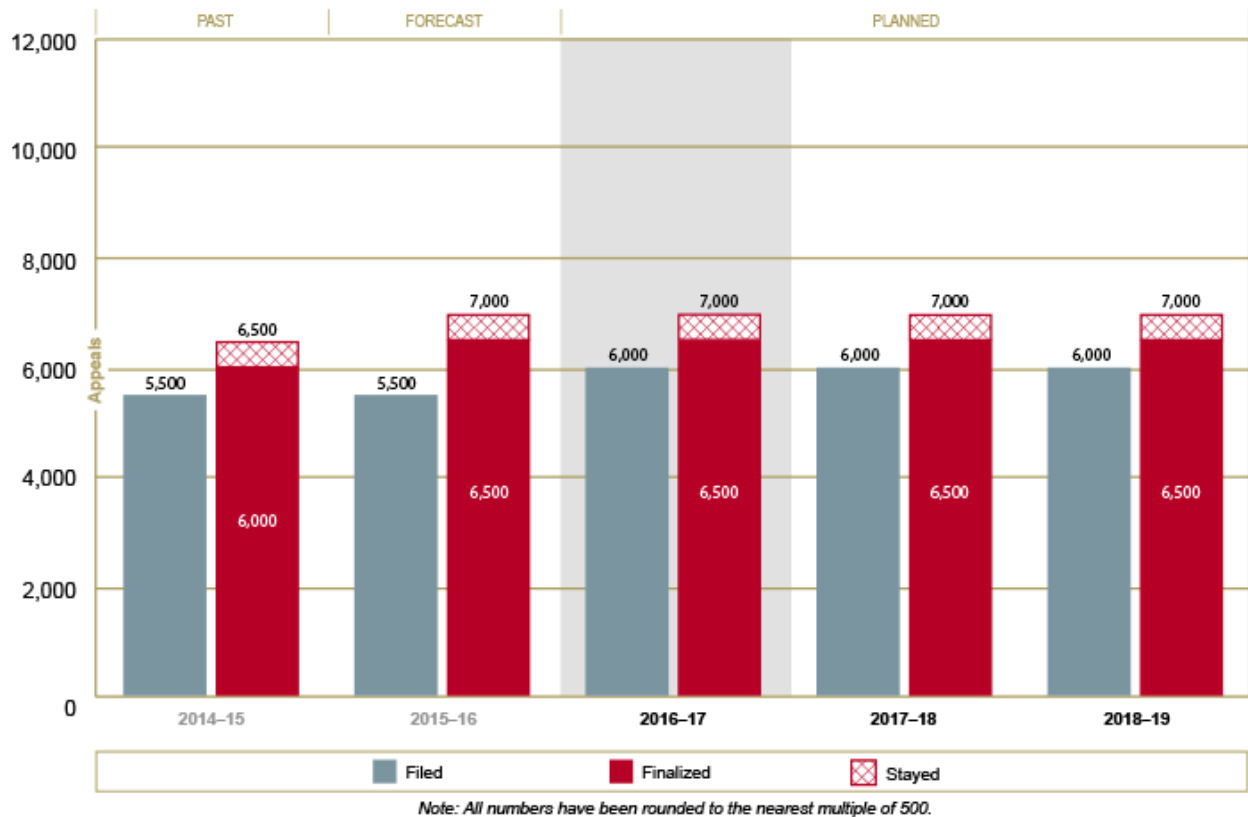Statistics Canada (2002). 2001 Census. Retrieved from

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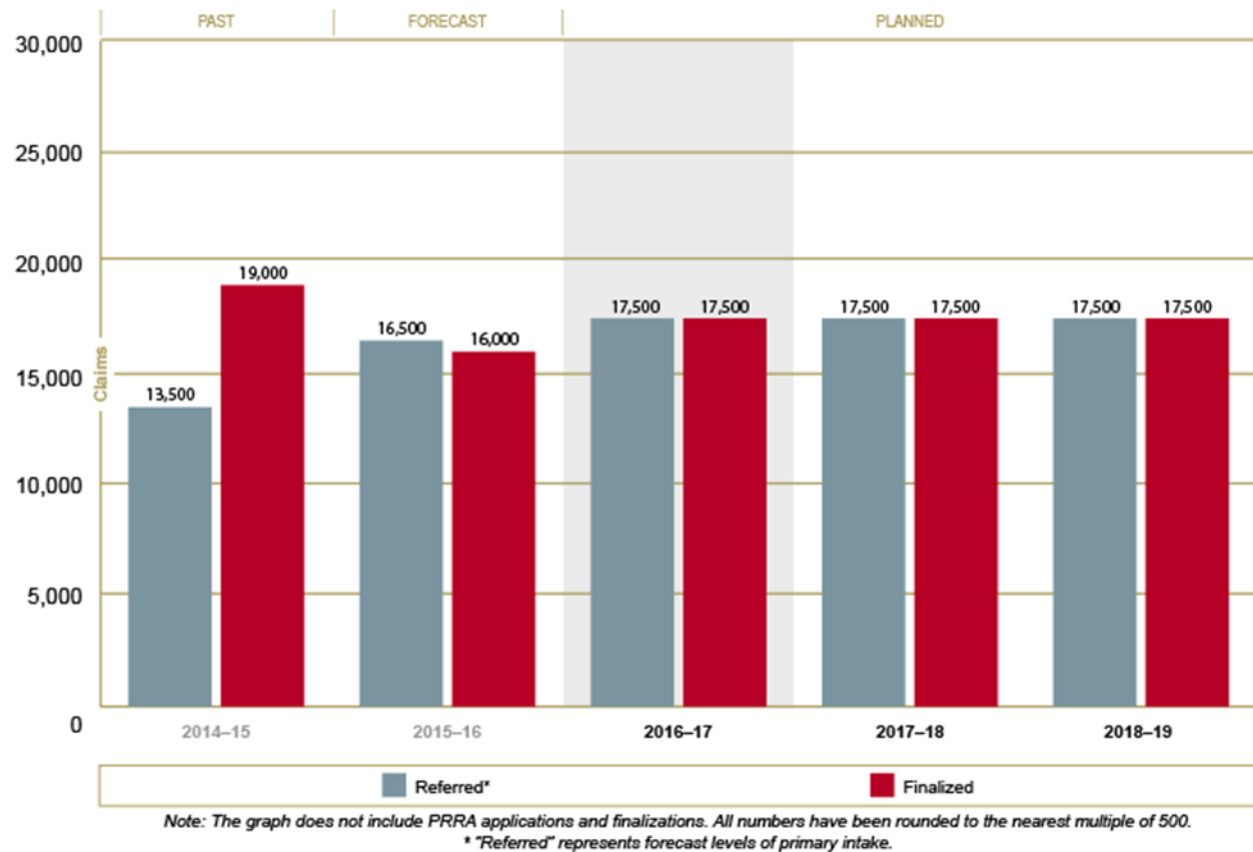   247-263. doi: 10.1177/1354067X9600200302

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Appendix A: Immigration Appeal expectation in Canada by 2019

Note: All numbers have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 500.

Appendix B: Refugee Claims expectation in Canada by 2019

Note: The graph does not include PRRA applications and finalizations. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 500.
* "Referred" represents forecast levels of primary intake.

Appendix C: Reading Comprehension

Read the article about the use of internet and choose the best topic.

Cyber-bulling causes suicide

Ways the internet has been used for good

Kind people save the world

It seems like every day you hear a new story about cyber-bullying, phishing, or a new computer virus. But when good people get together on the web, it's amazing what they can achieve.

Preventing Suicides

While you probably have heard stories about cyber-bullies pushing someone to commit suicide, there are also tons of stories about depressed people deciding not to kill themselves after talking to someone online whom they never even met. Unfortunately, we don't hear about these cases nearly as often.

Despite all the trash talking in online gaming sessions, there is also a real sense of camaraderie and friendship. In one case, a teenager from Ontario called the police after one of his gaming buddies in Texas said he was thinking of ending it all. An officer came to the Ontario boy's house and talked to the other teen over the computer game until he was able to earn the trust of the suicidal boy. Eventually, he convinced the teen in Texas to let him speak to his father, who reported that he had no idea his son was feeling that way and would do whatever it took to help his son get through this difficult time.

These sorts of incidents aren't limited to gaming sessions though; one woman in Australia saved an English man's life after seeing a post where the man said he would kill himself within the next 15 minutes. She spoke to him online for a while, gaining his trust until he gave his phone number to her. She then got one of her friends living in England to call the suicidal man and talk to him until the man felt comfortable sharing his location. When the police showed up at the depressed man's house, he already had a phone cord wrapped around his neck, but had not yet tried to end it all. Police praised the actions of the

Australian woman and her friend, pointing out that the young man probably wouldn't have made it if the two hadn't acted so quickly and diligently.
Even actress Demi Moore has been credited with saving someone's life thanks to the net. When a woman Tweeted to Demi that she was going to kill herself, Moore tried to talk her into changing her mind. Meanwhile, the celebrity's followers contacted the police in the area of the Twitterer and they were able to get to her home before she did anything drastic.

Saving Weddings

Not all good deeds need to be so serious. Regular readers might recall the article posted last month about the couple whose wedding was saved by Twitter donations after their wedding planner disappeared with their entire deposit. As it turns out, that's not the only wedding that's been saved by the internet. When someone put up a post about how the owner of the mansion he had booked for his venue backed out of the deal only three weeks before the big day, other readers put out all kinds of suggestions. Eventually, he decided to host the wedding at a field at a nearby farm, as suggested by someone on the internet, leaving the poster with enough savings to provide his guests with ample free drink, as well as two bouncy houses.

Of course, between online charities, Kickstarter, free education lessons, support groups and other great programs, the examples above are only a few of the many ways people online have shown themselves to be altruistic. Have any of you ever joined a great cause online or been the recipient of such kindness?

Now Read the article again and answer the following questions.

1. How was the teenage boy in Texas saved from committing suicide?

   a. The police showed up at his house and talked to him

   b. His father went to the Police and asked for help

   c. The police talked to him over a computer game

2. When did the English man give his phone number to the woman from Australia?

   a. After 15 minutes

   b. After she called her friend

   c. After she spoke to him on the internet and gained his trust

3. Why did the couple have their wedding on a farm with a bouncy castle?

   a. The couple had lost their money

   b. The wedding planner had backed out

   c. The owner of the venue had backed out

4. Mark the following statements with T (true) or F (false).

   A. The Australian woman spoke to the English man over the phone

   B. The Australian woman had a friend in England

   C. The English man shared his address with the Australian woman on the internet

   D. The English man was dead with a phone cord trapped around his neck, when the police arrived

5. Mark the following statements with T (true) or F (false).

   A. Demi Moore tried to commit suicide

    B. Demi Moore has saved someone's life with the help of internet

    C. Demi Moore contacted the police to save the woman's life

    D. Demi Moore's followers contacted the police to save the woman's life

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

6. Did the teenage boy's father from Texas help saving his boy? How?

7. What did the police notice when they arrived at the English man's house?

8. What did the police mention about the Australian woman?

9. In the final story, how did the man pay for his wedding?

10. What other ways could you imagine internet helping people in their lives?

Appendix D: student consent and interview

Participant consent

"I_____, consent to participate in **Quality Improvement Action Research** for Simon Fraser University conducted by **Fatemah Jalali-Tehrani**. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. My signature below indicates my consent to

    a. Participate anonymously

    b. Participate indicating my name

Signature   date

_____

_____

Interview questions

1. What activities from the class did you enjoy most?

2. What particular activity or piece of information stood out to you (surprised you, interested you)?

    If so, why?

3. Are there any suggestions to make the class better for the future?

4. What are the main challenges? (attaining/achieving the skills?)

5. How did you feel about the Charades activity?

6. How did you feel about the vocabulary activity(matching with photos and definition?

7. How did you feel about the rhyming words activity?

8. Did you find the new activities effective in mastery of the subject matter?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

10. What did you find most interesting in your reading topic?

Fatemah Jalali-Tehrani
Email: fatemahj@sfu.ca

Appendix E: Teacher Questionnaire

1. Which cognitive tools in the lesson plan did you like best?

   What did you like about them?

2. Which cognitive tool-related activity would you use again? Why?

3. How would you use the cognitive tools differently to help students meet learning objectives?

4. How would you adapt the cognitive tools you learned for use in a different activity?

5. Did you feel that our 30-minute conversation and the links provided were sufficient to support your use of IE tools and activities?

6. What could we have done differently in terms of training to better support your implementation of IE?

7. At any stage, did you think of new ideas and come up with new activities based on IE, kinds of understanding, cognitive tools? Explain.

8. Would you be interested to use cognitive tools in your daily lessons from here on? If so what do you think can best support your implementation of cognitive tools?

9. What advantages and disadvantages do you see to using IE in an ESL classroom? Advantages_____

   Disadvantages_____

10. What are your suggestions for an IE teacher-training/ Pro-D in the future? (Please include suggestions related to length and depth of orientation conversations, use of observation and feedback, access to tools and links, and whatever other suggestions)

11. Do you find the presence of an IE educator in the classroom an advantage/disadvantage for the teacher? Explain.

12. How could the presence of the IE educator be most useful in the classroom? To present material and lead the class with suggested activities, or to observe and provide the teacher with feedback?

13. What collaborative follow ups could be useful after an IE teacher-training/Pro-D?