THE PHILOSOPHER'S TEAHOUSE:
IMPLEMENTING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY
IN
MULTICULTURAL ESL ACADEMIC PREPARATION
CLASSES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how students understand and experience critical pedagogy in four culturally diverse ESL classes in Northwest University, located in a multicultural metropolis in Canada. I conducted the study in my own classes, simultaneously examining my practice and its impact on my students since teachers' and students' identities are entwined. Through dialogue and negotiations among teacher and students, critical language pedagogy provides an innovative approach to teaching English language skills that enables students to challenge inequality, since language is a powerful tool, often used to control, persuade or exclude. I chose a critical ethnographic case study as the most appropriate methodology for uncovering the multiple ways ESL students make meaning of a pedagogical process that has to date received little practical guidance. My study, which took place over one academic year, offers an introspective and detailed portrait of the pitfalls, practicalities and possibilities of such an approach, from the perspectives of the students and pedagogue themselves. An analysis of the classroom interactions, assignments and private interviews, reveals that students considered the pedagogy meaningful because it not only taught them practical language skills, but also connected their lives to the sociopolitical, alerted them to their rights and prepared them to become active, engaged and equal participants in their new society. My research contradicts the stereotype of the submissive, uncritical ESL student through numerous examples which illustrate how students exhibited multifaceted, agentive subjectivities, both within and outside the classroom. My findings show that a critical pedagogy enabled some of the students to identify and challenge unfair situations in their everyday lives in Canada. In addition, they reflected on and sometimes rejected their own internalized hegemonic cultural practices, and even encouraged others to consider different

perspectives, thereby claiming and asserting redefined self-determined identities. One

student articulated her dream of establishing a teahouse in China that reflected our critical

classroom. And so I chose the *Philosopher's Teahouse* as a metaphor for my classroom – a

place where students discuss among equals the controversial issues of the day, learn new

multicultural perspectives and in the process provoke changes in themselves.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue: What am I doing here?!

First day back in the classroom after a year of educational leave. Can't believe how nervous I feel! Facing a new class of students at the beginning of a semester has always unleashed a swarm of butterflies in my stomach. But nothing like this! Of course, a year away disrupts the taken-for-granted familiarity of an educational institution – the everyday practicalities that happen outside the classroom. How do I use this new photocopier? Has my computer/voice-mail/mailbox/paycheck been set up? Who will orientate me to the latest programs in the language lab? How can I get up to speed with the computer technology that has far outpaced me during the past year? How will I fit all the department and institutional meetings into my already heavy workload?

After a teaching career spanning three continents and almost three decades, I wasn't anticipating this paralyzing self-doubt. Is this what theorizing has done to my teaching practice? Having decided to turn the critical lens upon myself and my teaching practice, putting myself and my students in the centre of my research, I am suddenly besieged by 'what ifs'. What if my students drop out/fail? What if I can't squeeze a 'critical' perspective into the tight curriculum? What if the 2-hour classes twice weekly are too brief to successfully incorporate a dialogic questioning process into my teaching practice? What if I'm not a 'critical pedagogue' after all?
(Diary: 4 September, 2007)

A year after writing this diary extract, I can shrug off my misgivings, heartened by

Kumashiro's (2004) wise observations of the uncertainty of educational practices, given the

unpredictability inherent in the teaching and learning process and the complexities and

dynamics of the teacher and student relationships. Nevertheless, the doubts revealed in my

diary still point both to the challenges underlying critical language pedagogy and the

vulnerability of the researcher/researched. The words of Ellis and Bochner (2000)

poignantly echo my initial trepidation: "…the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being

able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret it.

It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating"

(p. 738).

Yet, since teacher and student identities are intimately connected in classroom practices, in investigating my students' responses to a critical language pedagogy, I *had* to also place myself under the critical lens. Lee (2007) came to a similar conclusion in her study of another "critical" English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program in Canada. She observes that it soon became imperative to determine "how student identity was negotiated vis-a-vis teacher identity and the pedagogy these teacher identities embodied" (p. 6).

1.2 The problem: Why critical language pedagogy?

While there has been a growing body of critical language theory in second-language education over the past two decades, many classroom practitioners continue to focus predominantly on teaching as an apolitical enterprise, unconnected to the economic and sociopolitical context outside of the classroom (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 2001; Tollefson, 1995). Yet theorists maintain that language and power are inextricably entwined: ESL as a discipline is marginalized in schools and in the academy; second language teachers (predominantly women) are marginalized in relation to language and education theorists and administrators (until recently, often males); ESL students, many of whom have been the traditional objects of colonial power and currently predominantly constructed as the "Other" (Said, 1978), are often marginalized in education and in society (Luke, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 2001; Willinsky, 1998). Moreover, English language teaching has long been associated with the legacy of colonialism while the emergence of English as a global language is closely associated with the unequal distribution of power throughout the world since English is now used to gain economic opportunities for English speakers, disadvantaging those who don't speak English (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1995).

In order to address these concerns, some teachers and scholars have introduced a critical agenda into their ESL pedagogy. Drawing on critical social theories and Freirean emancipatory theory (Freire, 2006, 2007), critical language pedagogy acknowledges the unequal power relations implicit in the profession. In addition, however, it recognizes that English language learners (ELLs) do not passively fit into these socio-cultural hierarchies; they are also capable of agency, which Ahearn (2001) describes as complex, contradictory and ambiguous actions, wherein human actors might accept, accommodate, ignore, resist or protest socio-cultural hierarchies, sometimes simultaneously. Through dialogue and negotiations between teacher and students, students and students, critical language pedagogy aims at teaching English language skills that will help students challenge inequality, which will lead to improving their lives and ultimately the wider society (Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Freire, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1995, 2001).

However, critical ESL teachers have struggled to operationalize these lofty and well-intentioned objectives in the day-to-day workings of the language classroom. A major part of the problem lies in the inherent contradictions within critical theories themselves, according to many scholars (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Johnston, 1999; Lather, 1992; Weiler, 1996), who have made this charge against critical theories for the following reasons: Critical theories include a predisposition towards becoming hegemonic themselves, a new "regime of truth," yet they uphold counter-hegemonic ideals. They posit a postmodern critique of knowledge as well as a modernist, deterministic liberatory objective. They contain a problematic Western-oriented conceptualization of empowerment and pedagogy, yet challenge Western norms. They have a tendency to self-righteousness

and obscure theorizing, with little guidance for the practitioner, yet practical change is a core principle in critical theories. Moreover, critical theories embody an assumption that critical pedagogues and scholars themselves know what empowerment means for the disempowered and that they can provide alternatives for their students.

Students play a central role in critical language pedagogy (CLP) – education evolves through dialogical exchange among students and teacher about real-life issues that are meaningful to the students; the goal of critical pedagogy is to improve the students' personal and sociopolitical lives (Benesch, 2001; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Pennycook, 2001). However, to date there is very little in the literature that explores how students themselves understand and experience a critical language classroom, how the contradictions outlined above play out – are negotiated, rejected, or ignored – in the daily classroom interactions of English language learners themselves.

1.3 The purpose: What are the questions to investigate?

The purpose of this study is to investigate how immigrant and international students, from a variety of countries and cultures around the world, conceptualize and experience critical pedagogy in a multicultural ESL academic preparation class in a post-secondary institution in a culturally-diverse metropolis in Canada. In addition, I simultaneously scrutinize my own teaching practice, and reflect on the ways it impacts my students' identities and world views since theorists have noted the importance of understanding the critical language teacher's identity and how it influences the critical pedagogical process. For example, Morgan (1998) observes that the way in which we teach is as important as the content of our teaching while Kumashiro (2002) points out that what we teach unintentionally can be as significant as what we teach intentionally. As Lee (2007) states in

her doctoral dissertation, "Central to critical praxis is the process of critical self-reflection and the questioning of our identities and practices within the larger relations of power in which they are embedded" (p. 231).

Consequently, I have undertaken a critical ethnographic case study of a language course which focuses on how my students and I respond to, understand, experience and problematize the key characteristics of CLP, namely:

1. Drawing content from our own lives and experiences

2. Negotiating the curriculum together

3. Developing, with the teacher's guidance, a critical consciousness, that is an understanding of the ways our everyday lives are connected to sociopolitical structures

4. Transforming this understanding into actions which could change aspects of students' lives in order to improve their future opportunities

While critical scholars such as Freire (2007) have worked in fairly homogeneous, extremely marginalized communities, my classes are heterogeneous and my students usually are not severely economically marginalized. Thus in order to understand how CLP works in such a diverse, multicultural setting, I needed to address the following research questions:

1. What are my students' conceptions of social justice, fairness, equality and social transformation? Do they differ from mine, a critical multicultural pedagogue, who was socialized within a Western democratic tradition as well as within an authoritarian, racist apartheid regime?

2. Are student identities subordinated to the more powerful identities of the teacher? Are students indirectly pressured to conform to the "hidden" curriculum, that is, to the

norms and values of Western individualistic liberalism, which is overtly or covertly conveyed through the school ethos, curricula, tests and textbooks?

3. In what ways, if any, do students contest unfairness and inequalities in the classroom, the educational institution and in their everyday lives? Do they show agency by challenging taken-for-granted, conventional perspectives, the teacher's opinions, or the status quo?

4. How do students from diverse cultural, political and economic systems resolve difficulties and differences on controversial sociopolitical topics?

5. Are there important differences between the behaviour and perspectives of immigrants, who may need to negotiate between the ideological and cultural values of their homeland and the host country, and international students, who are typically temporary visitors in Canada?[1]

Related to these questions was my overarching concern: Does a critical language pedagogy better meet the sociopolitical-cultural and academic language needs of (my) English language learners?

1.4 Locating the research: Why me? Why my class?

Although "critical language pedagogy" and "teaching for social justice" have become buzz words in the academy in the last decade, very few ESL academic programs or instructors are identified in this way. While anecdotal evidence indicates that many

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[1] The distinction between international student and immigrant became somewhat blurry since most of my students identified themselves as immigrants although many intended to return to their homeland once they had completed their academic studies. Some students had immigrated to Canada with their families for the express purpose of getting a Canadian passport and education, but without a firm commitment to remaining in Canada. Consequently, this question evolved into simply looking at the ways students negotiated between the ideological and cultural values of their homeland and the host country rather than in trying to determine any differences between the responses of immigrants and international students.

teachers may introduce some aspects of this pedagogy into their practice, they were too vague and disparate for me to use as a basis for researching student response. So I began looking closer to home, at my own classroom.

Since 1986 I have been integrating social justice issues into the content of my language classes. As a white South African immigrant in Canada during the apartheid era, I discussed issues of racism in my homeland as well as in Canada. Through the use of guest speakers, personal narratives, video and audio vignettes, I encouraged students to reflect on and challenge their own experiences of discrimination in Western societies as well as within their own cultures.

For example, in the '80s, when AIDS was still masked by misinformation, prejudice and fear in Canada, and a taboo subject in Asian societies, my friend, Mike, who had AIDS, became a regular visitor to my class. Students learned and practiced interview and conversation techniques through their discussions with him. They completed grammar exercises, working with his authentic speech. In addition, they learned about the disease, and some of the controversies surrounding it, such as the prejudice towards people with AIDS and the cost of drugs to combat AIDS in Canada at the time. One of my former students, Miyako, wrote me some years later that she had established a support group for people with AIDS in Japan. I have engaged in similar activities with young students from The Gays and Lesbians Club, providing my students with the opportunity to interact with homosexuals "for the first time," to learn about their lives, the oppression and discrimination they faced, and to reflect on the biases in their own cultures.

My goals in bringing these and other social issues into the language classroom were to introduce alternative narratives, stories of the marginalized, and to critique oppressive

behaviours. In addition, I hoped to inspire my students with a desire to make the world a kinder, more just and egalitarian society and to provide them with some rudimentary tools for challenging unfair practices, both in their own lives and in the lives of others.

However, I had never labeled myself a "critical pedagogue" until I began theorizing my practice, drawing connections between my classroom and the academy during the last two years of my PhD program. It seemed to me that my teaching goals broadly corresponded to the aims of critical pedagogy. For example, Crookes and Lehner (1998) describe critical language education as "transformative education, which develops when education proceeds by means of a dialogue between teacher and student concerning real-world issues meaningful to the students, with the intent of acting on the world in order to improve it and, in the course of this, supporting students' political and personal development" (p. 320).

Even so, I was intimidated by the calls for revolutionary change and social transformation in the work of some radical criticalists, such as Giroux, Kanpol, McLaren and Torres. Like Johnston (1999), I found some of the vocabulary – *struggle, emancipation, liberation* – exaggerated and inappropriate for the North American context. Consequently, I doubted if I could legitimately claim to be a "critical pedagogue." However, some scholars in applied linguistics and other disciplines espouse a more nuanced and broader interpretation of critical pedagogy, one that validates awareness as the first step in transformative practice; that is content with making small inroads into a more just and compassionate society rather than waiting for a complete transformation that may never happen (Benesch, 1991, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Hafernik, Messerschmitt, & Vandrick, 2002; Pennycook, 2001; Vandrick, 1995).

It was only after reading their work that I seriously turned to my own students and my own practice as the research site, more comfortable with the less prescriptive interpretation of critical pedagogy. I preferred to regard my practice as critically-*oriented* pedagogy since this would enable me to investigate in a more open and dynamic way, avoiding the binaries – it is/it isn't critical pedagogy; it has succeeded/failed. Instead I wanted to try to understand the meanings my students and I make of my teaching and their learning.

I also hoped that by putting myself and my own classroom under the research lens, I could address the sometimes contentious relationship between the critical theorist and classroom practitioner. While practical change is crucial to critical transformative theory, there has often been little guidance for implementing such pedagogy in the language classroom. Although Benesch (2001) agrees that critical pedagogy should not become apolitical, student-centered pedagogy, she also worries "that those who want to teach critically could be discouraged…, fearful of 'contaminating' theory by misapplying it to their own practice" (p. 141). Her words gave me the courage to begin my own research. In naming myself a critically-oriented pedagogue and turning the research lens upon my own critically-oriented classroom, I hope my study can transcend the theory/practice divide by illustrating the notion of praxis, the reciprocal relationship between critical theory and practice; practice should be informed by theory which in turn must respond to the complex, "messiness" of classrooms. In taking on this challenge, I hope to also provide some concrete examples, insights and guidance for teachers struggling to implement a critical pedagogy in their daily practice.

Of course, researching one's own teaching practice is fraught with obstacles: the researcher's own vulnerability; a natural defensiveness towards one's own work; and trying

to make the familiar unfamiliar, that is, the difficulty of looking with a "researcher's eye" at what has probably become for me unreflectively routine ways of doing after 25 years of teaching. At first I considered having a colleague observe me, but given that critical moments are often spontaneous and arise within the more mundane tasks required by the curriculum, this seemed impractical. I also wondered how the presence of an outside observer might disturb the rapport in the classroom and limit critical opportunities. Instead, I decided to build on my awareness of the drawbacks, utilize consistent journaling, the openness of my student interviewees and extensive audio-taping in the classroom in conducting my research.

1.5 The significance

1.5.1 What can I add to the debate?

This study is important because student perspectives and responses to critical pedagogy are largely missing in the language education literature. Moorthy (2006) goes so far as to claim that research on critical approaches to language education in adult classes should be considered "pioneering research" because of the paucity of studies undertaken in this area. Lee (2007) concurs, maintaining that her research provides one of the few concrete case studies of how a critical approach is operationalized in practice. She notes that "it is stories like this of the challenges language educators face in envisioning critical practices in their classrooms that I think have been largely lacking in the literature, as there are few (if any) examples of in-depth case study analyses of critical approaches to EAP" (p. 8). In addition, Morgan (2009) states that "concrete examples of transformative pedagogies have been in relatively short supply" (p. 89).

In addition, most researchers have investigated *other* teachers' attempts to implement CLP. However, since critical self-reflection is essential to critical praxis, I incorporated my own experiences into the ethnographic description and analysis, interrogated my own practice and tried to determine its impact on my students within the larger power relations in which they are situated.

Critical theorists have worked in a variety of localized settings often with a homogeneous group of students. For example, Freire (2007) worked with the Brazilian peasantry while the work of Apple (1982, 1999) often related to African-Americans, Chicanos and Latinos in the United States. My classroom, on the other hand, consists of students from numerous countries and cultures and socioeconomic strata. In addition, some are international students, temporary visitors from democratic or totalitarian countries; others are immigrants from democratic countries, or from traditional patriarchal, socially and culturally stratified societies. My study looks at how a heterogeneous group of language learners, from a diversity of cultural, socioeconomic, political and educational backgrounds experience a critical language classroom.

At the time this study was conducted, many of my ESL students were from former authoritarian communist regimes and may have had little sympathy for liberatory critical agendas, grounded in neo-Marxism. Perhaps, like Vandrick's (1995) "privileged" students, they didn't want to overturn the status quo, but rather sought access to the power and privilege of the dominant discourse of their home countries or the West, which they saw as attainable through English and a Western education. In addition, some critical feminist researchers suggest there is a tension when the researcher positions the researched as "oppressed" or "subordinate" and they (the participants) do not see themselves as such

(Olesen, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). We cannot dismiss the participants' views as "false consciousness," attributable to the internalization of unquestioned notions of inequality, because they don't meet our Western expectations of democracy. For a theory that foregrounds social justice, pluralism and equality, we need to understand more fully what liberation means to second language students themselves, how *they* feel inequality can be challenged, and what *their* visions of a democratic society are. As Gore (1992) suggests, we need to ask our students what *they* want. By asking this question, I believe my study will contribute, not only to the accumulation of basic academic data in the field of critical language education pedagogy, but to a better understanding of our students' perspectives. I hope that this knowledge could then provide a firmer foundation from which to build an empowerment rhetoric *with* our students.

1.5.2 Research for social change

A key goal of critical ethnographic research is that it not only generates new knowledge, but attempts to reduce inequalities by challenging and influencing public policies, social movements and sociopolitical life (Canagarajah, 2005; Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Duff, 2008; Holliday, 2004; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 1994; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). However, some theorists such as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Vidich and Lyman (2000) criticize the overemphasis of critical ethnographic research in challenging and attempting to change policy and practice. They view this as an overestimation of its contribution and a failure to value the more modest contribution it offers to the documentation of the lives of people, the quality and trustworthiness of the findings and the production of knowledge.

However, in taking up a critical stance, I hope my research can respond to these charges by uncovering the tensions, contradictions and complications of CLP as it is implemented in my particular classroom. Through my study, I hope to provide a more complex and nuanced understanding of the ways my students and I, within a specific context, culture and sociopolitical structure, make meaning of the content and process of a critically-oriented pedagogy. In this way my research will add to the accumulation of knowledge in an under-researched area.

In addition, however, it is my explicit goal that the information from my study challenges and seeks to reduce inequality and unfairness in the classroom, in the academy and in my students' everyday lives. It is a further objective that my research will inform my colleagues, both within my department and the wider university. Two of the university campuses are located in areas with the highest concentrations of visible minority students in Canada. Consequently, instructors work with great numbers of students who are in the process of acquiring the English language, grappling with Canadian culture and struggling with their own shifting identities. My study could influence curricular and professional development activities at the university since it specifically addresses the critical issues raised in its Preparatory Education Report. This report states that "integrating non-traditional students means acknowledging the Eurocentric bias of most of the knowledge in our courses. We must discuss racism, gender issues, ethnicity in our courses. We must put privilege on the table for discussion as well. Those of us who have privilege must think about this taken-for-granted phenomenon of being part of the dominant culture" (*Northwest University's Preparatory Education Final Report*, 2003).

More broadly, my research could help educators and administrators provide a more inclusive and egalitarian learning environment for English language learners.

1.6 An overview: What lies ahead?

In Chapter 2, I outline my theoretical framework, which will provide the lens through which to approach my own research. This framework draws from two broad theoretical strands:

i) Part A: Critical social theories, with particular reference to critical language education theories and

ii) Part B: Multicultural theories, with particular reference to critical multicultural theories. These key theoretical concepts and their limitations indicate what is significant in my data and guide and inform my analysis.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my research methods and describe my participants, the site and the procedures I used in the research process. Since I examine my own practices and students, I also reflect on how my subjectivities articulate with and impact my participants.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I discuss and analyze my findings, connecting them back to the theory. I begin Chapter 4 with a discussion of oppositional behaviour. I then discuss students' conceptualizations of social justice and a democratic society. Finally, I question the way the Western world is often constructed as unproblematically democratic and free.

In Chapter 5, I discuss and analyze how my students and I negotiated the main components of a critical classroom, namely:

(i)   co-constructing the curriculum;

(ii)   connecting the microcosmic world of the classroom to the sociopolitical macro-structures;

(iii) dealing with linguistic issues;

(iv) expressing agency, that is their own already empowered identities, and

(v) determining if the classroom had any impact in transforming students' lives.

In Chapter 6, I conclude by summarizing my findings and linking them back to my research questions. I also re-examine the significance of my study and show how it has contributed to research in the field of critical language pedagogy. I discuss the implications for future research. Finally, I explain what I see as limitations of the study and how I addressed these limitations.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the ways my culturally-diverse students and I negotiated a

critical language pedagogy, I situated my research within the following theoretical

framework: In Part A, I discuss critical pedagogies and the main tenets of Freirean

emancipatory theory; next, I show the interconnection between language and power and

argue for the need to introduce a critical pedagogy into EAP classrooms. Since critical

praxis, a key component of critical pedagogy, involves the interplay between critical theory

and practice, I review the literature of some documented cases which illustrate how critical

language pedagogy has been implemented in the classroom and how students and teacher

trainees have responded to it. Finally, I problematize critical (language) pedagogies and

discuss some of the responses to these challenges.

PART A

2.1 Critical education theories

Critical theories are grounded in the works of Marx, neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt

School and taken up in later theories of social and cultural reproduction which explain how

inequalities are reproduced through social, political, educational and economic institutions

(G. L. Anderson, 1989; Apple, 1982, 1999; Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux, 1983;

Pennycook, 2001). Gramsci (1975) showed how dominant classes exercise power through

coercive forces, such as the military, as well as by "engineering consensus" through

ideological control. He explained that consent is often not the result of conscious choice,

but the unconscious acceptance of the thoughts and practices promoted by the dominant

classes and reproduced through state institutions such as the church, government, media and

the education system. These thoughts and practices become unreflectively absorbed into

the thoughts and actions of the dominated as "commonsense" assumptions which serve to legitimize the interests of the dominant group (P. Anderson, 1977; Auerbach, 1995; Giroux, 1983; Gramsci, 1975; Monasta, 1993).

In education this ideological hegemony appears through the curricula choices, textbooks, school policies, the perspectives of the educators and organizational practices such as testing, and tracking (Apple, 1982; Ball, 1990). Thus schools are not neutral sites, but serve to promote, maintain and reproduce the values and perspectives of the dominant (middle) class, educating students in ways that ensure they take their positions in a hierarchical work place (G. L. Anderson, 1989; Apple, 1982; Auerbach, 1995; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983; Talmy, 2005). Bourdieu (1991) calls these deeply internalized patterns of thought, values and behaviour "habitus" or "cultural capital". He explains that the middle class "habitus" of school culture not only permeates the education system formally, but also subtly conveys norms and values through the "hidden curriculum," such as school ethos or teacher expectations. Thus by applying the same cultural criteria in an equal way, white, male, middle-class students are advantaged in school and in the workplace (Bourdieu, 1991, 1998, 2000; Giroux, 1983; May, 1999; McLaren, 1989; Ross, 2000; Wacquant, 1992).

Social and cultural reproduction theories offer important insights into the political nature of schooling and the role education plays in socializing students into hierarchical relations in society. According to Apple (1982), "The education and cultural system is an exceptionally important element in the maintenance of existing relations of domination, and exploitation" (p. 10).

However, the focus of reproduction theories on hegemonic macrostructures underestimates the capacity for resistance of the actors at the micro-level of everyday life; hence reproduction theories offer few transformative possibilities. Gramsci (1975) addressed this concern through his "philosophy of praxis" which emphasized an active subject and the interconnection between theory and practice which could provide a framework for resistance and transformation. Through a process of consciousness-raising, led by radical middle-class intellectuals, the prevailing hegemony could be challenged and replaced with a modern, egalitarian socialist consciousness (P. Anderson, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Gramsci, 1975; Monasta, 1993). However, Gramsci does not acknowledge multiple forms of overlapping and sometimes contradictory forms of oppression such as gender and race; hence he still leaves open the possibility that the hegemony of the middle-class could be replaced by yet another hegemony, such as that of the working class.

Taking up the notion of an active subject, but moving beyond the determinism of reproduction theories, Apple (1982) argues that

> …schools are not 'merely' institutions of reproduction, institutions where the overt and covert knowledge that is taught inexorably molds students into passive beings who are able and eager to fit into an unequal society. (p. 14)

Instead, critical scholars view schools as more complex sites, in which active subjects – teachers, students, administrators – negotiate, respond to, resist or accommodate the many hegemonic conditions, which are situated, shaped and mediated by specific socio-cultural contexts (Ahearn, 2001; Apple, 1982, 1999; Giroux, 1983). For example, Willis (1977) showed that the working class "lads" in his study were not simply passive victims of a school system that successfully reproduced their positions in the labour force. Rather, the "lads" were rational social actors who consciously rejected the dominant school culture,

thereby actively participating in the reproduction of their place in working class life. Anderson (1989) argues that a more nuanced interpretation of reproduction and resistance provides a deeper understanding of the complex and contradictory relationship between human agency and social structures.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) contend that schools "could become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework" (p. 280). According to Giroux (1983) such a framework needs a dialectical critique which implies both a rejection of the current hegemony and an empirical intervention of "new modes of critical thought aimed at reclaiming the conditions of a self-determined existence" (p. 65). Without such a transformative agenda, critical theorists contend that reproduction theories have the potential to promote pessimism and despair since they offer no way out of oppressive relationships (Apple, 1982, 1999, 2002; Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux, 1983; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

In embracing a transformative critical agenda, critical theories have been influenced by Freirean liberatory pedagogy. Freire opposed an education system which socialized students into stratified roles. He described this process as the "banking" model wherein knowledge is deposited into students to be used by them in the future to secure economic advantage. In this model, knowledge is presented as objective while learners are seen as empty vessels, passively and uncritically awaiting knowledge that is transmitted to them by the teacher. Students are denied the tools they need to think and act reflectively and hence become powerless and voiceless. Freire calls this a "domesticating" process since its goal is to assimilate students into the dominant system (Apple, 1982, 1999; Apple & Beane, 1995;

Freire, 2007; Giroux, 1983; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995). However, Freire not only exposes unequal power relations, but theorizes a way out of oppression through his two central principles, "hope" and "praxis". Pennycook (2001) explains praxis as a complex integration of theory, practice, and reflection, "… a way of going beyond a dichotomous relation between theory and practice" (p. 2).

In the Freirean classroom, through problem-posing and dialogue, the curriculum is co-constructed by students and teacher out of problems and experiences from students' actual lives, academic concerns and social issues. In this way, the traditional role of the teacher as the "owner" and "dispenser" of knowledge is reformulated into a relationship in which knowledge is mutually and reciprocally constructed, imparted and received (Freire, 2007). Benesch (1991, 2001) explains that teachers guide students in identifying a "limit-situation," one that obstructs their ability to determine their own lives. Through dialogue and reflection, students decide to accept the status quo or challenge it. Freire (2007) refers to this as a process of "conscientization."

Challenging the status quo results in a situation of "untested feasibility" wherein an alternative is not clearly known, but envisioned; the ultimate goal is the transformation of people's lives into ones of greater hope and equality. Freire emphasizes mutual help since it avoids a patronizing position, with the helper (teacher) dominating the helped (student), thereby moving beyond Gramsci's notion of the radical middle-class intellectual who *leads* the process of consciousness-raising. Freire's "pedagogy of hope" provides the possibility of viable alternatives which students and teachers can attain through collective action and practical strategies within their own particular situations (Benesch, 1991, 2001).

However, Luke (2004) notes that Freire was working with the Brazilian peasantry, a context which is not necessarily applicable to others. Moreover, he holds that Freire's binaries – liberation/oppression, hope/despair – are too simplistic for today's world, complicated by economic and cultural globalization. Some critics see Freire as overly optimistic regarding the raising of consciousness of both teachers and students (Auerbach, 1995). hooks (1994) criticizes Freire for his sexism – a "blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight" (p. 49), but admits that Freire's model invites interrogation not rejection. Similarly, Weiler (1996) contends that Freire's insistence on a dialogical relationship between teacher and students fails to acknowledge the inherent power disparity in this relationship. Nevertheless, she admits, despite the idealism and vagueness of his thought, his passion and hope for "betterment," establish him as an icon for educators throughout the world.

2.2 Language and power

In the following sections, I show how language and power are interconnected and argue for the importance of a critical pedagogy in order to engage students and teachers in challenging power relations and seeking alternatives that will improve their lives in and out of school. As Pennycook (1999) observes, "[g]iven the global and local contexts and discourses with which English is bound up, all of us involved in TESOL might do well to consider our work…as located at the very heart of some of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time" (p. 346).

2.2.1 English in the second language classroom

Over the past two decades, many second-language education scholars, such as Alastair Pennycook, Suresh Canagarajah and Bonny Norton, have emphasized the political

nature of second language learning. However, in English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

programs, many teachers continue to conceptualize society as neutral and apolitical;

consequently, they focus predominantly on second language acquisition theories, the

mechanics of language, assessment and testing procedures, classroom management

practices and different approaches and methodologies which facilitate language learning

(Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 2001; Tollefson, 1995).

Benesch (2001) commends this approach because it reflects the ways in which

teachers analyze students' English language needs and provide them with the appropriate

instruction for improving their language proficiency. However, she believes that focusing

only on their language needs does not adequately prepare students to be successful since it

ignores issues of power within the academy and larger ESL field. Echoing Freire's

concerns regarding education as a "domesticating" process, Benesch maintains "…the

traditional EAP teacher is mainly a conduit for efficient inculcation of those [academic]

requirements rather than an activist who could invite students to question them" (p. 51). As

a result, students have little choice but to accept the academic conventions, and reproduce

them uncritically. She therefore calls for a reconceptualization of needs analysis which

embraces a *critical* needs or "rights analysis" in order to highlight power relations and

student agency; the former determines what practical skills students require in order to

pursue their chosen goals while the latter questions the status quo and engages students in

collective actions that affect their lives.

Applying social reproductionist theories of power to second-language education,

Auerbach (1995) explains that power permeates ESL classrooms through overt practices

such as tracking, and covertly through curricula choices, textbooks, and school ethos. In

this way the classroom can be regarded as a "microcosm of the broader social order" (p. 9). These practices become universalized, normalized and internalized as "commonsense" practices. She contends that the underlying assumption in such depoliticized language teaching is that if students don't succeed, it's because they haven't assimilated sufficiently into the American way of life. Systemic racism, sexism, classism in Western society is largely ignored. Benesch (1993b) explains that not questioning texts is itself an ideological position which favours the status quo. Morgan (1992/1993) exemplifies this in his critique of news reports during the Gulf War. He shows how meanings are constructed through grammatical forms to favour the US in the conflict. He argues that second language teachers and researchers have not interrogated such value-laden texts, assuming students need to be taught them unquestioningly in order to succeed in academic settings. Pennycook (2001) agrees, suggesting that since schools and classrooms are also sites of struggle and negotiation, a critical pedagogy introduces the possibility "… that we can actually do something" (p. 127) to contest the predominant versions of the world and constructed modes of teaching and learning.

2.2.2 English in the world

Pennycook also emphasizes the responsibility ESL teachers have since English language education has been closely linked to the colonial project. Underlying British imperialism was a Eurocentric epistemology that regarded European culture and the English language as the embodiment of civilization. However, assimilation into European culture and language was achieved at the expense of other knowledges, which were lost or sidelined, often by brutal conquest, religious indoctrination and cultural suppression, in the name of Reason and Enlightenment (Pennycook, 2001; Willinsky, 1998; Zinn, 2004).

Since many ESL students have been the traditional objects of colonial power and currently remain constructed as "Other," it is important for ESL teachers to acknowledge power differentials, deconstruct the classroom, text and discourse and examine how they relate to broader socio-economic, cultural and political issues in society (Auerbach, 1995; A. Luke, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1995; Phillipson, 1992; Willinsky, 1998). Luke (2004) explains it thus: "There can be no more overtly normative challenges to educational systems, educators and the state other than how they manage their cultural and linguistic Others" (p. 28).

Pennycook (2001) criticizes the essentialising attitude in mainstream TESOL that reproduces colonial relations of self and other. This has "rendered the cultures of others fixed, traditional, exotic and strange, whereas the cultures of English (America, Europe) are unexplored givens or moving, modern and normal" (p. 145). This overlooks the possibility that students have multiple identities and resources from which to draw (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Norton-Peirce, 1995a; Pennycook, 2001). Pennycook (2001) sees a critical pedagogy as providing a way to problematize *all* fixed identities, and make available to students a variety of subject positions. He advocates *engaging* with difference through overt discussions which form the basis of curricular organization, pedagogy and research.

Shin (2006) maintains "[c]olonialism has never left and still remains powerful in TESOL, constantly transforming itself" (p. 162). For example, she explains non-native English teachers (NNETs) are often constructed as authoritarian in relation to the more highly-regarded communicative, student-centered practices of Western teachers. However, she found this to be an oversimplification and essentialization of the role of NNETs who were able to construct counter-hegemonic third spaces in the local contexts in which her

study took place, based on their indigenous knowledges. She advocates the need to introduce a critical stance which questions commonsense assumptions, validates the situatedness of local indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in order to recreate English not as a colonial language, but in a third space as "shared language" (Smith, 1999). Thus critical language pedagogy proposes a postcolonial perspective which refers not to a temporal era, namely the period after the end of colonization, but to "an oppositional stance to the continuing effects of colonialism and an appropriation of colonial tools for postcolonial ends" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 66).

Many scholars contend that teaching ESL should be situated within a context of globalization and trans-nationalism since the emergence of English as a global language economically advantages those who speak English over those who do not (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1995). To illustrate this, Fouron (1991) describes how immigrants, driven into Western countries' sphere of influence in search of job opportunities and political freedom, are often unaware that the West itself has often created the conditions that force them to leave their homelands. Luke (2004) maintains that immigrants' lack of English proficiency often results in their living on the periphery of Western societies and economies.

Pennycook (1995) discusses the global spread of English and how the English language is bound up with global inequalities. He explains that it is commonly assumed, especially by English language teachers, that the spread of English is natural, neutral and beneficial to all: natural, since although the spread of English originated from colonialism, it has been perpetuated by accidental global forces; neutral, since it is unconnected to local cultural and political issues; and beneficial, since it enables people to access English culture

and the world, thereby increasing their economic opportunities. However, Pennycook argues that "most people in English language teaching have been poorly served by academic work that fails to address a far more diverse range of questions that might encourage a reassessment of our role as teachers of English in the world" (p. 38).

Pennycook (1995, 2001) emphasizes that language is inextricably bound up with power and consequently is always political. For example, the dominance of English in the world has threatened indigenous languages (cf. Phillipson's (1992) notion of *linguicism*); it also plays a significant role as gatekeeper to better jobs in many countries. Far from being natural, the spread of English has often been the result of deliberate policies of English-speaking countries in protecting and promoting their economic and political interests in the world. English as a global language also emphasizes the assumption of privilege, authority and superiority of native English speakers (NES). Such a '"colonial celebratory" position of English overlooks the "social, cultural, political and economic forces that compromise and indeed produce such choices" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 57). In order to counter this discourse, Pennycook urges applied linguists and English language teachers to be aware of whose interests are served by their work.

However, Pennycook (1995) favours " a critical paradigm that acknowledges human agency, and looks not only at how people's lives are regulated by language, culture, and discourse, but also at how people resist those forms and produce their own forms" (p. 48). He explains that people are not just passive consumers of the English language, culture and knowledge but active creators in the way they use English in their everyday lives. Although English was the major language of colonialism and neo-colonialism in much of the world, it was also the language through which opposition to colonization was formed (Pennycook,

1995; Willinsky, 1998). English reproduces global inequalities but also produces

opportunities for counter-discourses, for the creation of new meanings that challenge the

hegemonic Western discourses. Rather than completely rejecting or wholeheartedly

embracing English, Pennycook (1995) suggests

> ... counter-discourses can indeed be formed in English and that one of the principal roles of English teachers is to help this formulation… We should become political actors engaged in a critical pedagogical project to use English to oppose the dominant discourses of the west and to help the articulation of counter-discourses in English. At the very least, we should be acutely aware of the implications of this spread for the reproduction and production of global inequalities. (p. 55)

Thus critical language pedagogy provides one way out of the dilemma of dealing with

the limitations of ESL/EFL teaching.

Similarly, Canagarajah (2005) encourages applied linguists and language teachers to

examine their roles in the establishment and maintenance of unequal relations and not

assume that TESOL is neutral, natural and beneficial to all. He states:

> Although teaching a colonial language to students from many minority language groups is a controversial activity fraught with political significance, L2 professionals largely adopted an idyllic innocence towards their work…. L2 teaching was motivated by the pragmatic attitude of equipping students with linguistic and communicative skills that would make them socially functional. (p. 931)

However, he also calls for a more nuanced and complex response to the

harmful/beneficial dichotomy, arguing that students can renegotiate the terms and contexts

in which English language learning takes place (Canagarajah, 2004, 2005).

Similarly, Crookes and Lehner (1998) explain that ESL/EFL teachers have not been

encouraged to address sociopolitical issues which Freirean educators consider to be at the

heart of the educational purpose. Shin (2006) goes further, arguing for a decolonizing

TESOL praxis informed by indigenous epistemology. According to Smith (1999), "[t]he

language of imperialism may have changed, the specific targets of colonization may have shifted, … but imperialism still exists" (p. 100). Shin (2006) explains that the stigmatization of the "Other" still persists in areas of language policies and pedagogies. For example, English monolingualism is still constructed as superior to bi/multilingualism. Consequently, ESL students are often viewed in the academy and in the work place as linguistically "deficient" and ESL courses are regarded as "remedial" (Shin, 2006; Talmy, 2005). This has implications for teaching practices in ESL classrooms. For example, "survival ESL" for refugees prepares them for minimum-wage jobs, thus reproducing their low status in society while the needs of international graduate students, who are often regarded in post-secondary education as "cash cows," are not always sufficiently met. Within Korea, Shin explains that the struggle for English is not about acquiring the English language, but about "belonging to the global elite community and acquiring the symbolic power of English to gain recognition of the English-speaking community" (p. 155).

2.2.3 The main tenets of critical language pedagogy

In order to address issues of power in second language teaching, critical scholars advocate implementing a critical language pedagogy in the ESL classroom. In this way, they believe teachers and students can actively transform their experiences, and use English to gain greater equality and justice for themselves which will ultimately lead to a more egalitarian and compassionate society. Critical language pedagogy has been influenced by a variety of theories, the most notable of which include critical theories, Freirean liberatory pedagogy, postmodernism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism and feminism. At the risk of oversimplification, I have highlighted the main tenets of CLP below. However, I have engaged in a more critical discussion in Section 2.3.

Critical language pedagogy

- Addresses inequalities and power relations in language education. The micro issues of the classroom – conversations, second language acquisition – are connected to the macro structures of society, ideology, colonialism, racism, gender, sexual orientation and class.

- Views language and language education as complex domains in which social inequalities are both reproduced and contested.

- Is an approach to applied linguistics that includes simultaneously teaching practical language skills and social critique.

- Problematizes "neutral" knowledge which is transmitted from teacher to student. Instead knowledges are collaboratively constructed, and always political, so are concerned with issues of power, access and inequality.

- Avoids homogenizing and essentializing cultures, but instead constantly questions structures, categories, and assumptions.

- Acknowledges the impossibility of single strategies and the need to work contextually. Pennycook (2001) warns that attempting critical work through one methodological or analytical lens can become hegemonic in itself. Rather, "critical work must always be on the move" (p. 100).

- Grounds language education in ethical arguments which seek alternatives that prioritize equality and justice.

- Challenges hegemony by constantly questioning "commonsense" assumptions through a collaborative dialogical process between students and teachers, and among students themselves.

- Attempts to avoid dogma by constantly questioning theory, practice and one's own

  position through the notion of reflexivity. It is a way of thinking that pushes

  boundaries and stimulates debate, discussion, argument, and dissent.

- Links theory to action and change. It is not enough to simply make connections to

  the ways language is implicated in unequal social relations; possibilities for

  intervention and transformation must also be explored.

(Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Kubota, 2004; A. Luke, 2004; C.

Luke & Gore, 1992; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1995, 2001).

2.2.4 Implementing critical pedagogies

In the following section I discuss some of the documented accounts of how CLP has

been implemented in some ESL classrooms and teacher education programs. I also discuss

student and teacher trainees' responses to this pedagogical approach.

In the ESL classroom

An important element of Freirean critical pedagogy is the co-construction of the

curriculum by students and teachers. To exemplify this, Auerbach (1993b) describes how a

group of immigrant women researched issues of un/employment and produced a photo-

story which other women could use to help them overcome barriers in the job market.

Benesch (1996, 2001) explains how she negotiates the curriculum with her students,

connecting the classroom to their outside lives through a constant interplay between "needs

and rights." In this way, students learn both language skills and how to problematize

assumptions, such as topic choice, classroom dynamics, role of the teacher and sources of

funding by asking the following questions: "Who formulated these requirements and why?

Should they be fulfilled? Should they be modified? What are the consequences of trying to

change current conditions? What is gained by obeying, and what is lost?" (Benesch, 2001, p. 53).

She describes how she applied these critical questions to her own English for academic purposes (EAP) classes, which were linked to regular university credit courses. She successfully re-negotiated both her own marginalization as an ESL teacher to mainstream professors and that of her second-language students. She explains how their discontent in the regular classes initially manifested itself in oppositional behaviours, such as tardiness and lack of participation. Through intense questioning of traditional academic discourse (teachers' expectations of in-class performance and assignments and students' normalized conformity to teachers' expectations), Benesch and her students established an action plan which involved questioning their mainstream professor's abstract material, ambiguous assignments and unreasonable deadlines. Since their concerns were all addressed by the professor, either through agreement, mutually agreeable renegotiation, or reasoned acceptance, students felt empowered within the academic administration and successfully passed the mainstream class.

In another class Benesch (2001) chose the topic of "anorexia" in order to give the students the linguistic support they needed to be successful in the mainstream class, as well as an opportunity to discuss a feminist topic, absent in the mainstream psychology curriculum. This topic enabled the class to challenge patriarchal power relations and address female concerns related to body image and control, thus fulfilling critical pedagogy's call for a curriculum that relates to students' own lives and interests and challenges unequal power relationships. Although a number of students initially resisted the topic, Benesch contends that questioning the reasons behind the resistance is in itself an

essential part of a critical pedagogy, not a sign of failure, but a moment for dialogic participation.

Benesch (2001) was criticized for imposing this topic on her students "in the name of social/political consciousness-raising" (Santos, 1998, cited in Benesch, p. 69). However, she rejects this perspective since it positions the student as passively absorbing the political agendas of critical teachers. Instead critical pedagogy recognizes "the coexistence of power and resistance" and sees students as "active participants in dialogic teacher-student relationships" (p. 70). Moreover, by negotiating the choice of topic with her students, Benesch also succeeded in rejecting the supportive role which stigmatizes ESL teachers in higher education. Instead, it positioned her as an "active intellectual," an equal and co-constructer of the curriculum.

In another class, however, Benesch (2001) explains that she gave up her choice of a reading text that dealt with topics of immigration, acculturation and racism because of student opposition. The decision was made after self-scrutiny and self-reflection, core elements in critical pedagogy. Benesch felt she needed to honour her critical commitment to negotiated decision-making. However, the decision emerged from a dialogical process during which the students presented an alternative activity for examining systemic racism and unequal power relations.

In response to charges that a critical pedagogy has the possibility of alienating students because of its focus on depressing controversial issues, such as abortion and pollution, Benesch (2009) and Morgan (2009) advocate situated praxis in which issues are connected in a meaningful way to students' daily and academic lives in order to encourage an emotional connection and intellectual engagement. Benesch describes how she

introduced the topic of war and military recruitment in her class as a response to the presence of military recruiters on her U.S. university campus. Although a difficult subject, students were actively engaged since it related to their present concerns and gave them tools for dealing with the possibility of being approached by the recruiters.

In his critical ethnographic study with community college students, Truscello (2004) describes how he guided his working-class students to an understanding of how social capital networks facilitate success in life and how they have been used traditionally by the upper and middle-classes to maintain their dominance. By implementing a critical approach, Truscello helped his students develop a critical consciousness of how their lives are constructed. They then described plans for social action to transform their situations by developing their own social capital networks that would expand and enhance their future life chances.

On the other hand, in her doctoral dissertation, Moorthy (2006) found that the absence of clear curricular objectives in the community-based critical language program she researched meant that "instructors and administrators struggled to specify language skills, plan content, carry out assessments to monitor student progress or evaluate program effectiveness" (p. 186). Consequently, she argues that there was a gap between the critical intentions of the program and the actual outcomes. She questions whether teachers were able to effectively empower students within such a context and recommends instead the need to first establish a more pragmatic and viable framework to conceptualize linguistic objectives and plan for a more cohesive approach to critical pedagogy.

In Lee's (2007) study of a critical EAP program, the students she interviewed didn't think their language learning goals had been met by their instructors and doubted whether

the program's CLP goals would benefit them in achieving academic success. Many students did not see how the program's critical goals related to passing the TOEFL[2], the ultimate gatekeeper to further academic studies. Hence, they labeled the program "boring," "too hard" or "useless" (p. 162). Lee explains that the classroom became a site of struggle between what the instructors considered "good" teaching and learning and what students thought they needed to get ahead; in addition, the students themselves were torn between wanting to learn English for communication and just wanting to pass the test.

Lee (2007) contends that the teachers she interviewed interpreted their students' non-participation and negativity as resistance to the program's pedagogy. None reflected on how their own teaching practices may have contributed to this resistance. Moreover, most teachers did not consider that their students may not have had any choice in the decision to learn English since knowledge of English has become imperative in order to be successful in the international arena. Consequently, despite the program's goal of empowering students through its critical program, because the teachers' roles were themselves never problematized, the classrooms remained sites of disempowerment. Instead of providing opportunities for students to access new language learning opportunities and more powerful identities as agents, the classrooms reproduced subordinate student roles.

In summary, the above examples show some successful applications of a critical language pedagogy while others reflect the frustrations of both teachers and students. Consequently, they provide important lessons for the critical practitioner, illustrating both the challenges and the potential for CLP in fostering dynamic, participatory socially-engaging learning environments.

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[2] TOEFL = Test of English as a Foreign Language

In teacher education programs

Lee (2007) concludes from her research that a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of critical praxis would enable teachers to become more aware of their actual classroom practices and the ways students were often (unknowingly) prevented from gaining access to classroom discourses. She therefore advocates a shift to a new model of critical teacher education. However, attempts to introduce such critical teacher education programs have themselves met with resistance.

Gore (1992) explains her efforts to empower her students had undesirable outcomes; some teacher trainees left the profession because they were disillusioned with its oppressiveness; others became politicized and ostracized, thereby risking job security while still others just accepted the status quo.

Crookes and Lehner (1998) describe their "double-loop" approach to TESOL education, which involved using the techniques and principles that they hoped their student teachers would use. In particular, they wanted the student teachers and instructors to be responsible for making decisions which would include selecting, introducing and presenting material throughout the semester. This process was successful and was praised by the students in their evaluations. However, many Asian student teachers were pessimistic that they would be able to implement such an approach in their own countries. Since CLP involves dialogue, a dialectic relationship which may cause some tension, can be a natural outcome. Kumashiro (2002) explains that such a level of discomfort is necessary in order to experience "crisis" and ultimately transformation. However, Crookes and Lehner (1998) point out they were constrained by time so could not take such a position too strongly.

Crookes and Lehner also encountered some resistance to the notion of CLP as a viable approach although views did shift by the end of the program. Quite a few students "weren't convinced that traditional education is biased, discriminatory and perpetuates the status quo" (p. 325). The researchers also found that participation was problematic both in determining the extent of the instructors' own participation in discussions as well as intervening on behalf of less active participants.

Willett and Jeannot (1993) also encountered resistance to empowerment education in their ESL teacher preparation program. Their attempts to empower through the role of facilitation had mixed results – some teacher trainees dropped out of the program; others felt it undermined their competence; and it reproduced the social roles/status quo within the group. However, like Benesch, Willett and Jeannot argue that resistance is itself empowerment. If the students were completely without power, they would simply have gone along uncomplainingly with what was required of them whether they agreed with it or not. However, in their efforts to understand the problem of resistance to critical pedagogy within their teacher education program, the authors acknowledged that they had created a dilemma: "We have created a coherent explanation for ourselves – one that gives us the courage to continue our work in the face of resistance…In doing so, we increase our chances of silencing those who resist" (p. 493).

Lin (2004) met with similar resistance when she introduced critical pedagogy into the curriculum of the teacher education program in Hong Kong. Student teachers resisted the academic language in James Paul Gee's (1996) *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, which they found alienating. As marginalized ESL teachers themselves, they often felt pessimistic and powerless. Lin (2004) acknowledged the crucial need to look at the Hong Kong

context, "where the political system is far from democratic, teachers' unions are underdeveloped, and labour relations in schools are lopsidedly unfavourable to teachers" (p. 278). In such a situation, she felt critical pedagogy may put teachers in danger. Lin also had not interrogated her own normative behaviour as a typical traditional middle-class Canadian-educated Chinese teacher who insisted on disciplinary power, such as punctuality and assigned readings. Lin explains, "[My students] had every right to resist being put into subject positions which were subordinate to my disciplinary power, like children, who are subjected to their parent's disciplinary power" (p. 284). She admits that even though she had good intentions, students resisted. She concludes by reflexively acknowledging that she should have problematized her own experiences, and discussed and negotiated the critical curriculum together with her students. She encourages others "to join in the journey of re-imagining and working out, at their respective local sites, critical pedagogies specific to, and suitable for, each of our respective contexts" (p. 287).

On the other hand, Goldstein's (2004) attempt to engage new teachers in conflict resolution and anti-discriminatory education in a safe and non-threatening environment was successful. She wrote a play around the theme of whether the *English Only* policy should be enforced in a school that had a recent influx of Chinese students. The play addressed issues of inclusion, assimilation, and discrimination and arose out of a real life situation. The conflict deliberately remains unresolved in order to provide the teacher trainees with an opportunity to write their own endings in small groups. Goldstein cites four advantages in using role plays to problematize power differentials and work for social justice. It provides a non-threatening way of exploring "hot" topics; students see many different viewpoints and

dilemmas; students can reflect on these issues from a safe distance; and alternative solutions can be explored.

These examples of attempts to introduce a critical pedagogy into teacher education suggest that critical pedagogy is not straightforward or unproblematic and indicate the need for reflexivity. Morgan (2009) advises critical teacher educators not to bombard student teachers with decontextualized and abstract notions like *hegemony* and *linguicism* which could result in despair and alienate student teachers from the profession. He questions whether critical pedagogy can be taught in the same way as, for example, academic vocabulary or other aspects of L2 teaching and notes the lack of research regarding the preparation of student pedagogues for transformative teaching.

2.3 Critiquing critical pedagogies

In the following sections, I examine some of the criticisms of CP literature, drawing on examples from critical language education where possible. I also discuss some of the responses to these limitations and challenges.

2.3.1 Problematizing "power"

Many scholars have pointed out that critical pedagogies, including critical language pedagogy, have themselves constructed a meta-narrative of "emancipation" (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Johnston, 1999; Lather, 1992; Weiler, 1996). Gore (1992) draws on Foucault to show that all discourses, even emancipatory ones, can become "regimes of truth," systems of power that produce and sustain their own discourse, presenting their discourse as "a final truth … just what critical 'truth' cannot be" (p. 66). Pennycook (2001) concurs, stating that "one of the problems of emancipatory-modernism is its assurity about its own rightness, its belief that an adequate critique of social and political

inequality can lead to an alternative reality" (p. 8). He recommends a problematizing stance which turns "a skeptical eye towards assumptions that have become 'naturalized', notions that are no longer questioned" (p. 7).

Gore (1992) questions the notion of "empowerment" itself, a central principle in critical pedagogies. Critical theorists exhort teachers to "engage unyieldingly in their attempts to empower students both as individuals and as potential agents of social change" (McLaren, 1989, p. 221). Gore contends this gives enormous power to teachers who are themselves disempowered by the patriarchal institutions within education. This resonates in language education where many ESL practitioners are female. Moreover, Auerbach (1995) and Benesch (1991, 1993b, 2001) maintain that ESL teachers are themselves marginalized, so often do not have time to endlessly generate new "liberatory" material, nor critically question procedures. Benesch describes ESL teachers as having a "service" relationship to colleagues in other departments with ESL courses serving the needs of regular courses instead of being equal, participating, contributing partners who mutually influence each other.

Ellsworth (1992) claims that strategies for student empowerment in critical theories give the illusion of equality while leaving the authoritarian teacher/student relationship intact. In educational institutions, the professor's authority is usually greater than the student's, so Ellsworth recommends acknowledging this inherent power imbalance and teachers' own complicity in the structures they are trying to change.

Apple (1999) critiques the overemphasis on oppression, contending that not everything is hegemonic; some democratic tendencies have emerged in North America in feminism, gay and minority rights. He emphasizes that unless these gains are

acknowledged critical educators could lose credibility with those struggling to build a more democratic education.

Similarly, Gore (1998) looks at how power is used across educational sites to determine whether it is always repressive. She argues that Foucault's "technologies of power" – surveillance, classification, normalization and regulation – can be oppressive when used in an authoritative and abusive way, but can also be productive in increasing school efficiency. She found that power circulated across and through all sites that she investigated, including those who professed not to use disciplinary power, such as Teacher Education programs and feminist groups. However, she argues that Foucault views power as destructive *and* productive and that bringing about change does not necessitate radical change, nor does everything need to be changed. She recommends identifying power that facilitates pedagogy and that which should and could be changed.

Inherent in critical theories is the implication that theorists themselves know what empowerment means for the disempowered and that the empowered critical theorists can bring this about and provide alternatives (Apple, 1999; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1993; Orner, 1992). Apple (1999) explains, "[a]cademic boundaries are themselves culturally produced and are often the results of complex "policing" actions by those who have the power to enforce them and to declare what is and is not the subject of 'legitimate' social inquiry" (p. 165). Likewise, Pennycook (2001) argues that liberatory theories imply a problematic belief "in their own rightness and ability to help others see the light" (p. 40). He warns that critical applied linguistics should not become a dogma itself, with "British, American and Australian 'experts' trotting around the world telling [others] how to do their work" (p. 170).

Orner (1992) maintains that teachers are also positioned as the main arbiters of their own students' liberation and voice in critical pedagogy. This is based on the assumption that the classroom represents an egalitarian place with a liberatory teacher positioned as "empowerer" versus other teachers who are "oppressors" – they decide who is liberated, whose authentic voice is valued and whose is cast out. An example of this can be seen in Morgan's (1997) effort to empower his female Hong Kong Chinese students by exposing them to a variety of stress and intonation patterns which correspond to different social relationships. He states that through these classroom activities and reflections, he offers students a chance to "forge new cultural traditions, histories and solidarities that potentially improve their life chances for the future" (p. 432). There are many unsaid assumptions in this goal – that his students are not empowered, that he knows how to empower them, that being empowered for Hong Kong Chinese students has the same meaning as being empowered in Western society and that women in Western society are already empowered. Missing from this discourse is a Freirean dialogical exchange with his students to include *their* answers to these questions, self- reflexivity or any interrogation of these assumptions through a postcolonial lens (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1992; Orner, 1992; Pennycook, 2001). It would be wise to pose Ellsworth's (1992) question "empowerment for what?" If the social, legal and economic structures have not been correspondingly transformed to support a Chinese immigrant who has become "empowered" through her ESL classroom experience to challenge her husband, she could possibly end up being even further disadvantaged. Who will take responsibility for possible unintended outcomes?

Gore (1992) suggests greater humility and reflexivity, asking our students what *they* want instead of imposing one's own vision upon them. She recommends engaging in

purposeful activities to help students exercise power, but cautions outcomes may be limited, partial and unpredictable.

2.3.2 Defining "critical"

While the "critical" is a key notion in critical pedagogies, understandings of the term range from "rational questioning procedures as a way of trying to create objective distance" to "an explicit social critique… aimed toward trying to change inequitable social conditions and people's understandings of them" (Pennycook, 2004, p. 329). It is the latter definition that is at the heart of critical pedagogies. After a year of researching the critical EAP program that had promoted itself as embracing an innovative critical dialogic approach to teaching, Lee (2007) concluded that there was a serious disjunction between the program's stated pedagogy and teachers' actual classroom practices. This was partially due to a lack of clear definition of the term "critical" and a concomitant absence of a theoretical base on which teachers could build a practical pedagogy despite a number of professional development initiatives.

Lee contends that over the course of the year, teachers relied more and more on the "rational questioning" techniques such as "compare your culture to Canadian culture" which resulted in simplistic, shallow discourse – yes/no; right/wrong – which reinforced the dichotomies of traditional language programs, reproducing the Self/Other binary. Thus Lee suggests that teachers need to incorporate into their classroom discourse both a postmodern perspective, which embraces complex, nuanced and multiple knowledges, as well as a critical agenda which problematizes social inequalities and strives to change them. Without clarity around these key concepts, teaching "critically" in this program became synonymous with inculcating in their students a Western epistemology, that is, a liberal, individualistic

Eurocentric vision of society. As a result, some students were unable to take advantage of language learning opportunities "as their identities were being constructed and subjugated vis-à-vis the more powerful identities their instructors asserted" (p. 229). Lee warns, "[w]hen there is a lack of clarity in what it means to be a critical language teacher, our practices may inadvertently translate into pedagogies quite the opposite of what we intended" (p. 202).

Moreover, Lee also found that some teachers believed that their students were unable to think critically or challenge authority because of their traditional culture and education system which teachers assumed relied on uncritical conformity. Consequently, these teachers felt it was difficult to develop and maintain any critical analysis in their classrooms. However, Shin (2006) states that in a study on Korean secondary school students in EFL classrooms, students "could actively engage in dialogue in classroom and could critically discuss social issues…when prompted by an appropriate curriculum context" (p. 156). She warns that the assumption that uncritical thinking is inherent in particular cultures is part of the continuing legacy of colonialism.

2.3.3 Problematizing "ethics"

While critical pedagogy is grounded in ethics and incorporates an explicit commitment to "teach for social justice," there has been little in the literature that clearly explains how this ethical foundation is conceptualized and operationalized in practice.

Corson and LeMay (1996) prioritize equal treatment, respect for persons and maximum benefit. Pennycook (2001) reminds us that "it is perhaps compassion, but a compassion grounded in a sharp critique of inequality, that grounds our work" (p. 7). Pennycook suggests that since the human condition is one of pain, "applied linguistics may

have an important role in either the production or the alleviation of some of that pain. But it is also a view that insists not merely on the alleviation of pain but also the possibility of change" (p. 7). Pennycook explains further that within a postmodern critical applied linguistics framework, there are no fixed, objective ethical codes to rely on, "only confrontation with the real ethics of hard decisions" (p. 137). This, Pennycook explains, necessitates a complete rethinking of applied linguistics, problematizing the exclusive focus on language acquisition, and teaching methods and addressing in addition the ethical demands of language education such as the global spread of English. Brandes and Kelly (2001) recommend "spotlighting the perspectives of subordinated groups" (p. 437), and "teaching for democratic citizenship, [defined as] a process of communication across differences that aims to solve collective problems" (p. 447).

In a study to determine what social justice means to faculty and students in an educational studies department, Mohan and Walker (2008) concluded that "despite wide-spread hesitation about the desirability and feasibility of a shared conception of social justice, there is some consensus that social justice *should* entail what we term dialogue (as a basis for relationships and the development of a critical consciousness) and what we call critical action (concrete steps towards greater equity and just practices)" (p. 14). In addition, Mohan and Walker identified the following shared themes that emerged from their data: participation, diversity, inclusion, respect and equity of access to equitably distribute resources (financial, cultural and academic). They also noted the tensions between postmodern and critical theory inspired conceptions of social justice. They contend the former focuses on "recognition" and "rights" and embraces a narrative of diversity, pluralism and inclusion; on the other hand, critical theory emphasizes "responsibility" and

"redistribution," which necessitates a focus on structural issues and the need to distribute resources more fairly (p. 15).

Johnston (2003) sees critical language pedagogy as one way of addressing issues of inequality and injustice, but believes that *all* language teaching is rooted in moral issues, (conflicts, dilemmas and problems) and is value-laden. He argues that in ESL, morality has certain unique features since values are always negotiated across cultural boundaries, so teachers and students are always faced with the problem of presenting, explaining and often justifying cultural practices. He says "cultural conflicts are an integral part of language teaching; they are not problems to be overcome once and for all but are part of the permanent moral landscape of our occupation" (p. 116).

He argues that the resolution of these moral issues needs to be contextualized rather than absolute and depends on a complex interplay of factors operating at multiple levels: the individual and socio-political/the teacher and student(s)/rationality and affective concerns such as personal beliefs. He acknowledges that respecting students' values and beliefs, while also being true to one's own values is a difficult balancing act. Because of this complexity, Johnston holds that there is a degree of messiness, ambiguity and uncertainty in any discussions and analysis around moral issues in the ESL classroom. He explains that there is a disjunction between broader sometimes oppressive political processes and the inherent goodness that teachers know for certain is an element of their classrooms, such as the bonds formed between students and teacher, and the role of the teacher as a cultural bridge into students' new society. These sometimes contradictory claims are not easy to reconcile and he advises that teachers need to find their own way, which may need adjusting "with each new group of students and each new teaching and learning situation" (p. 73).

While Johnston offers clear insights into the student-teacher relationship that transcends sociopolitical concerns, he does not acknowledge the *shifting* nature of culture and cultural beliefs (our students and our own) which are dynamic and fluid and therefore can be questioned and can change (See Section 2.5.3 Critical multiculturalism for further discussion).

2.3.4 Problematizing "praxis"

Another challenge in critical pedagogy is how to operationalize the theories in the language classroom since to date there has been little practical guidance for practitioners (Benesch, 2001; Gore, 1992; Johnston, 1999; Morgan, 2009). However, Giroux (1983) explains that theory's real value lies in its ability to establish possibilities for reflexive thought and practice. He claims, "[it] functions as a set of tools inextricably affected by the context in which it is brought to bear, but it is never reducible to that context. It has its own distance and purpose, its own element of practice" (p. 21). Auerbach (1995) and Canagarajah (2005) agree, arguing that there is no prescriptive formula, only a "tool box" from which "we must feel free to pick and choose among the available critical theories as relevant for the particular job for the diverse students, classrooms, and communities we are working with" (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 932). Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) argue that avoiding specificity is deliberate in order to allow room for disagreement among theorists, since there is not one, static Critical Theory, but many dynamic critical theories.

On the other hand, some theorists such as Gore (1993) and Benesch (2001) believe critical pedagogies should include theory, social vision *and* instruction for teachers since they are the ones expected to transform society through daily classroom practices. Benesch (2001) explains, "[w]ithout examples of critical practice for scrutiny and reflection, critical

theory becomes an abstract description of an unattainable utopian project" (p. 141). Gore (1993) insists, "[a]s all teachers who have attempted to practice critical pedagogies know, we *have* to act" (p. 137). Likewise, Benesch (2001) encourages teachers to implement critical agendas in the language classrooms, maintaining that "it is riskier to ossify critical theory in an attempt to preserve its political purity, than it is for some student-centered teachers to mistakenly claim to be critical teachers" (p. 141).

Pennycook (2001) acknowledges some truth to these claims, but argues that critical theory needs to inform our thinking in order to understand how power is constructed and maintained in language classrooms and what the possibilities are for change in different contexts. However, it should be accessible and constantly questioning itself, a praxis that transcends the dichotomous relation between theory and practice and becomes a reciprocal relation in which theory is a form of practice and vice versa, "a movable praxis… a constantly shifting and dynamic approach to questions of language and education rather than a method, a set of techniques, or a fixed body of knowledge … a way of thinking and doing that is always questioning" (p. 173).

One of the motivations in my study was to add to the theory/practice debate, not only by providing teachers with concrete examples of CLP in the classroom, but also by illustrating how my practice both informed and was informed by theory.

2.3.5 Radical transformation vs. reform

Some critical language pedagogues have criticized the rhetoric of revolution and emancipation in some critical theories, charging that this may inhibit implementation of critical pedagogies in the classroom. This resonated with me since I had been intimidated by such a radical stance and consequently reluctant to identify as a "criticalist." On the

other hand, I felt much more comfortable with theorists such as Benesch, Pennycook and Vandrick who propose small steps of reform (See Introduction). I also agreed with Rattansi (1999), who also contends that **"**a policy of critique and non-involvement or critique and unrealistic demands may keep one's hands and spirits unsullied, but does little to improve the life chances of ethnic minority …pupils [who] would benefit from 'reformist' equal opportunity programmes and even limited change … 'mere' reform is better than none, and may indeed provide the basis for further institutional change" (p. 104).

Benesch (1991) explains that changes take many forms and may not be immediate or immediately recognizable but rather gradual, cumulative, and abstract, such as changes in attitude, which may take years. She asserts that what is achievable is often limited by the contingencies of academic institutions and educators' own power within these structures. Canagarajah (2005) agrees, but says we should not underestimate the *relative* autonomy of institutions which allows for significant changes and action to occur at the local level of classrooms every day.

Benesch (2001) and Gore (1993) suggest greater humility and acceptance of the limitations of knowing and absolute emancipation. Vandrick (1995) argues that rather than seeking macro-structural transformations, "we must begin where we are and do what we can to make small dents in the injustices perpetuated in societal systems" (p. 380). Similarly, Pennycook (2004) encourages us not to be limited by waiting for the "big" moments which haven't transformed society yet. Instead he suggests that critical language education is about "the quiet seeking out of potential moments, the results of which we don't always know" (p. 342).

2.3.6 Problematizing "voice"

In critical pedagogies, students' "silence" is often considered the result of hegemonic, dominating forces while "breaking the silence" or "finding one's voice" is construed as a critical understanding of one's conditions of oppression (Freire, 2007). Pennycook (2001) defines "voice" as "the struggle for power to express oneself when those forms of expression are discounted by mainstream forms of culture and knowledge" (p. 101).

Orner (1992) suggests a more nuanced interpretation of "voice," one that takes into account that it is not always safe for students to speak, that the teacher is not always an ally, and that silence is not always a sign of oppression, resistance or false consciousness. Orner advocates trying to understand what the silences tell us in specific historical and social contexts in which classrooms are located. Stein (2004) agrees, based on her empirical research in a post-apartheid South African classroom. She states that speaking out can be dangerous and serve to further repress, so the interpretation of "voice" as a liberatory practice must be contextualized. She holds that students have a right to silence and that silence has many meanings. She calls for an inclusive silence which "acknowledges learners as subjects of integrity who may want teachers to 'hear' that there are things which are unspeakable, which cannot be said" (p. 109). She recommends that critical pedagogy take into account the range of representations students use to convey meaning.

Similarly, Ellsworth (1992) regards "voice" as a contested domain, arguing that whether to talk or not is not just about critical pedagogues giving voice to the silent, but in the choice of the oppressed to gauge the situation in terms of power relations and safety. She questions the Freirean concept of dialogue since it assumes that all members have equal opportunity to speak, all ideas are tolerated, and all members respect other members' rights

to speak. This assumption ignores the effects of race, class and gender that profoundly affects whose voice is heard. This is exemplified in Norton-Peirce's study (1995a) of the ways five immigrant women negotiated opportunities to speak English in Canada. She found their decisions to speak or not speak reflected their many different identities – ESL students, low-paid employees, co-workers, mothers and wives.

Ellsworth asserts that classroom practice that facilitates communication occurs when students and teacher acknowledge that their knowledge of others, of the world and of "the Right thing to do" will always be "partial, interested and potentially oppressive to others" (p. 115). Orner suggests interrogating those who demand that others talk – teachers, writers, theorists, researchers and administration. In Duff's (2002) study, a Canadian teacher attempted to implement an official and personal ideology of respect, social justice and "authentic voice" in her class, which consisted of both local native English-speakers and immigrant non native-speakers. Like Norton-Peirce (1995a), Duff found that students were silent or participated for many different reasons, negotiating a variety of different identities, discourses and expectations. She states that one consideration is the extent to which students actually *want* to display their identities and personal knowledges in class and are enabled to do so without negative personal consequences.

She describes two long-time immigrant students who didn't participate in class because they didn't need to since they had other "multilingual repertoires, literacies, expertise and identities to draw on and use in the multiple discourse communities they belonged to locally and internationally" (p. 314). Other students relied on different ways of participating "not all of them requiring immediate, active personal responses or self-disclosures" (p. 314). On the other hand, the two students, both visible minorities, who

spoke the most and participated actively, were amongst the lowest achievers. Nevertheless, they dominated class discussions and "co-constructed narratives of understanding" with the teacher because they had internalized the appropriate "cultural capital," namely that active participation in Western education is highly-prized.

Shin (2006) also questions the construct of "silence" which is often interpreted in the Western classroom as an inability or unwillingness to participate and therefore often regarded as a deficit or indication of the inability to "think critically." She states that in Western classrooms "talk" is constructed positively, regardless of the quality or content of the speech. Alternative interpretations of what other forms of linguistic interaction silence may signify in Eastern thought, such as listening to, understanding and appreciating others' thoughts and speech, is disregarded. According to Shin, this attitude illustrates the persistence of colonialism in much of education today.

2.3.7 Response to critiques: The importance of reflexivity

Rather than undermining critical work, the above critiques embody the notion of reflexivity, the constant interrogation of assumptions and contextualization of social action, which is a core concept in critical theories. In other words, rather than suppressing or avoiding such interrogation, critical theories invite, even welcome self-questioning. Pennycook (1999) explains that self-criticism is a crucial element of critical work and should include constant skepticism and constant questioning. In this way, critical theories continually reinvent themselves, adapting to the localized and contextualized in multiple ways, both known and still to be revealed. These critiques alerted me to some of the possible challenges in critical pedagogies and the implications for my classroom practice and research project.

2.3.8 Summary

Critical theories of education explain how power differentials are reproduced through institutions such as schools. However, they also take into account agency, acknowledging that schools, educators and students are not passive, but actively engage with dominance. Critical theories avoid being stuck in a deterministic pessimism by embracing a Freirean liberatory agenda that encourages active counter-hegemonic action in order to transform society into one that is more compassionate, democratic and egalitarian. They challenge Eurocentric knowledge which has disadvantaged other knowledges and ideologies. Instead, they acknowledge marginalized voices and lives, emphasizing the multiply overlapping, contradictory identities and ways that oppression intersects with race, class, and gender. In order to avoid a static, dogmatic theory which could become yet another disciplining "technology of power," critical theories invite constant interrogation and reflection. Similarly they acknowledge the subjectivity of the theorist/researcher, and so necessitate both personal and epistemological reflexivity.

In all these ways, critical theories are suitable and applicable to language education. This is because language and language education are connected to unequal power relations: ESL as a discipline is undervalued in schools and in the academy; second language teachers, often women, have a lower institutional status in relation to language and education scholars, who have, in the past, often been males; ESL students, many of whom are constructed as the "Other," are often marginalized in education and in society. Moreover, English as an international language has been implicated in the continuing legacy of colonialism and the widening gap between rich and poor since it economically advantages those who speak it. However, critical language pedagogy does not imply a total

rejection of the teaching of English, but instead provides a way of dealing with these inequalities through counter-hegemonic discourses.

There have been a number of attempts to implement a critical pedagogy in language classrooms. Through a pronunciation class, Morgan (1997) encouraged his female Hong Kong Chinese students to challenge gendered social relationships. Auerbach's (1993b) class of immigrant women put together and publicly displayed a photo-story describing barriers in the job market and ways to overcome them which helped to inform other women facing similar obstacles. In Benesch's (2001) adjunct courses, her ESL students presented their concerns regarding inequalities, unfair or ambiguous academic expectations to their regular faculty who adjusted their teaching practices accordingly. Truscello (2004) contends that he helped his working-class students develop a critical consciousness of how their lives were constructed. As a result, they were able to transform their situations by developing their own social capital networks that would improve their future life chances. Lee (2007) researched an EAP program in a university that explicitly marketed itself as incorporating an alternative critical pedagogy, yet she concluded there was a disparity between the goals of the program and the teachers' actual practices.

However, critical theories have themselves been challenged on the following grounds:

- They can include a constructed meta-narrative of "emancipation," a discourse that appears to be final and fixed; hence they could become hegemonic themselves.
- They imply a knowledge of what empowerment means for the disempowered and an assumption that critical theorists can provide alternatives.

- The discourse is often theoretical and idealistic; it can be vague regarding classroom application and does not provide enough guidance for the practitioner.

- While problematizing Western thought and ideology, some critical theories are themselves rooted in North American cultural capital.

- Students are often positioned as "oppressed" and "voiceless" implying that their voices are not validated elsewhere, such as in their own communities.

- The emphasis on "voice" has also been questioned since it is not always safe or desirable for students to speak out, the teacher is not always an ally, and silence is not always a sign of oppression, resistance or false consciousness.

(Apple, 1999; Benesch, 2001; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1993; Johnston, 1999; Lather, 1992; Norton-Peirce, 1995a; Orner, 1992; Pennycook, 2001, 2004).

Researchers and practitioners have also outlined some of the challenges in implementing CLP in the classroom. These include:

- co-constructing curricula with students

- analyzing complex connections between micro- and macrostructures with students who have limited English language proficiency

- clarifying ethical concepts such as social justice

- transforming awareness of social injustice into social action

- defining what it means to be "critical" given the wide range of possible interpretations

(Johnston, 2003; Lee, 2007; Moorthy, 2006; Pennycook, 2001)

Some scholars suggest that language teacher education programs need to expand from a focus on teaching skills, methodology and classroom management to embrace a broader

critique of power in sites of learning (Goldstein, 2004; Lee, 2007). However, many researchers have documented resistance to critical teacher education programs. They describe how some student teachers dropped out of the program due to disillusionment with the oppressive nature of the education system; some felt pessimistic and powerless to implement a critical approach within their teaching contexts; others expressed skepticism of CLP as a viable approach to language teaching (Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Gore, 1992; Lin, 2004; Willett & Jeannot, 1993).

These theories provided me with the framework for implementing my own critical language pedagogy. They showed me why a critical approach is necessary and appropriate in an ESL classroom and what the key principles of a critical approach should be. Moreover, in investigating how my students and I understand and experience such a critical language classroom, I drew from these theories to ask if and how my students and I:

i.   drew content from our own lives and experiences

ii. negotiated the curriculum together

iii. developed an awareness of the ways our everyday lives are connected to sociopolitical structures, and

iv. developed with the teacher's guidance, a critical consciousness, which could lead to actions that change aspects of students' lives in order to improve their future opportunities.

In addition, in examining my own CLP classroom, it was important for me to reflect on and be guided by the literature that documented how CLP was operationalized in classes and teacher education programs and how students and teacher trainees responded to such approaches. Finally, critiques of critical pedagogies did not negate the importance of a

critical EAP pedagogy for me, but rather highlighted the complexity of implementing a

critical praxis, alerted me to its possibilities as well as its limitations and the implications of

these on my teaching practice and research project.

PART B

2.4 Theories of multiculturalism

Changing demographics and new immigration patterns over the past decade have

transformed the nature of most Western societies. According to Statistics Canada, 75.0% of

recent immigrants to Canada who have arrived since 2001 were members of visible

minorities[3] (*Canadian Census*, 2006). If current immigration trends continue, Canada's

visible minority population will continue to grow much more quickly than the non-visible

minority population. According to Statistics Canada's population projections, members of

visible minority groups could account for roughly one-fifth of the total population by 2017

(*Population Projections of Visible Minority Groups for Canada, 2001-2017*, 2005).

Despite promises of full and equal access to social, cultural and economic

opportunities, enshrined in Canada's 1971 multiculturalism policy (Dewing & Leman,

2006), 20% of visible minorities, or 587,000 people, said they had sometimes or often

experienced discrimination[4] or unfair treatment in the previous five years (*Ethnic Diversity*

Survey, 2003). More than 7 in 10 visible minorities (71%) who reported sometimes or often

experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment gave race or skin colour as the reason, either

alone or in combination with other reasons.

Since my immigrant, (predominantly) visible minority students are reflected in these

statistics, an examination of theories of multiculturalism is pertinent to my investigation in

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[3] "A member of a visible minority in Canada may be defined as someone (other than an Aboriginal person) who is non-white in colour/race, regardless of place of birth, for example, Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese…." ("*Employment Equity Act*," 1995).

[4] "Discrimination means to treat someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction which, whether intentional or not, has an effect which imposes disadvantages not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to other members of society. There are eleven prohibited grounds: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, mental or physical disability and pardoned conviction" ("*Canadian Human Rights Act*," 1976 - 77).

order to determine if and how these inequalities are reproduced through the education

system and if and how they are challenged in a critically-oriented language classroom.

Because my study looks at how a heterogeneous group of language learners, from a

diversity of cultural, socioeconomic, political and educational backgrounds experience a

critical language classroom, I found it helpful to locate my research within a framework of

multicultural education theories.

2.4.1 Assimilationist theories

Assimilationists address cultural diversity by helping ethnic groups adopt Western

culture and traditions and take advantage of Western ideals of freedom and liberty which

they believe everyone wants (Parekh, 2006; Sleeter, 1995). Difference is viewed as deviant

and conflictual, a potential source of instability in a nation, so multicultural polices that

support pluralism are regarded as divisive, leading to the fragmentation of the nation. The

only way, therefore, to secure a stable nation-state with universal goals, principles and a

common identity is through assimilation into the dominant, Eurocentric culture. Rather

than focusing on past and present differences, assimilationist rhetoric stresses a common

future (Cole, 1989; Knight, Smith, & Sachs, 1990; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Parekh, 2006).

Assimilationist theories have been criticized because they are based on a theory of

cultural deficiency, deeply rooted in the "colonial project"; they imply that only

Western/Eurocentric cultures have value and consider that nothing can be gained outside

this preferred way of life; consequently they justify forced conformity in the name of human

equality and universal rights (Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006). One of the major weaknesses in

this theory is that it is premised on society as a level playing field, so ignores the legacy of

racism, especially the profound and lasting effects of slavery and colonialism, which has

resulted in the unequal distribution of wealth, resources and power (Cole, 1989; Dei, 1996; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kubota, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). Its colour-blind perspective, which is upheld as a desirable democratic principle, expressing equal treatment is, in fact, a myth since it ignores the structural inequalities embedded in the "common" culture. It does not acknowledge that the "common" culture predominantly benefits the dominant group while others are excluded, or that the price of inclusion means the loss of language, religion, or cultural practices. On the contrary, implicit in the assimilationist view is the assumption that minority cultures will benefit from giving up their cultures, languages, and values if they take on the dominant ideologies, social and economic practices (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Kubota, 2004; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Parekh, 2006). According to Parekh (2006), assimilationist policies continue to flourish, at least covertly, in response to increasing diversity in Western societies.

2.4.2 Superficial multiculturalism

In response to the weaknesses of assimilationist perspectives, liberal Western democracies began looking to multicultural policies to address the problems of socio-economic and political exclusion, racism and school failure among its visible minority cultures (Banks, 2004; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Parekh, 2006; Sleeter, 1995). In 1988, the Canadian Liberal government enacted a multicultural policy which officially incorporated cultural diversity into its state policy and national identity. The main thrust of this policy was to maintain and develop cultures, overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society, promote cross-cultural interaction and provide government assistance in the acquisition of one of the official languages ("Canada Multiculturalism Act," 1985; Kymlicka, 1998; Moodley, 1995).

In some schools this has resulted in more inclusive curricula and materials which reflect the contributions of other cultures; celebration of different ethnic festivals, foods and music; pedagogical changes that focus on cooperative rather than competitive learning and diverse role models in teaching and administrative staff (Banks, 2004; Cole, 1989; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Sleeter, 1995; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994). According to Mitchell (2003), multiculturalism functions as a key national narrative of coherence and unification in countries with large immigrant populations. It not only respects difference, but legitimizes that diversity through a unifying nation-building project. The goal of this project is to create a coherent and unified *liberal* culture with strict rules which control who is accepted and who rejected – diverse groups are accepted only so long as the fundamental philosophy of liberalism is adhered to. Multicultural education aims to develop a certain kind of individual who tolerates difference, but only within the parameters of liberalism.

Critics acknowledge that liberal multiculturalism recognizes and affirms diversity, different cultures and world views which has resulted in more acceptance, tolerance and respect for other cultures and some improvement of academic achievement among visible minorities. Nevertheless, they contend it has remained essentially assimilationist, if not overtly, then through the "hidden curriculum" since it is still based on the cultural deficiency theory which could now be overcome simply by affirming difference (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Moodley, 1995). Underlying this policy is the liberal myth of the neutrality of public space. Culture can be affirmed and even celebrated provided it does not threaten the protection of common characteristics such as education, freedom of speech and equality for all (Mitchell, 2003; Gutman in Taylor, 1994, Introduction). In reality, in a hegemonic multicultural society, the neutral or common public space reflects the dominant culture

(Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dei, 1996, 2000; Dei & Calliste, 2000). In a study to determine the feasibility of teacher neutrality in the classroom, Brandes and Kelly (2001) conclude that teacher neutrality is not only undesirable, but impossible since those teachers who claim they have no politics are actually perpetuating the status quo since underlying this claim is the assumption that multiple perspectives compete on neutral grounds in classrooms. On the contrary, Brandes and Kelly maintain, without active intervention, the classroom is a site where the dominant culture and ideology persists. Thus by ignoring structures of power, class, gender and reasons for poverty, multiculturalism does nothing to challenge inequality and oppression (May, 1999; McCarthy, 1990; Parekh, 2006; Troyna & Carrington, 1990).

Another criticism of superficial multiculturalism is that it essentializes cultures and freezes them in time – they become static and homogeneous. Cultural members are expected to behave in predetermined ways, giving them little space to resist or to access a variety of identities (Parekh, 2006). This could result in deeper marginalization, ghettoization and cultural stereotyping (Allcott, 1992; May, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). Appiah (1994) concurs: "It is at this point that someone who takes autonomy seriously will ask whether we have not replaced one kind of tyranny for another" (p. 162). Similarly, Duff (2002) contends that minority students are sometimes expected to be "cultural representatives" of their particular culture. In her study of a Canadian high school social studies class, she found that some students resisted the teacher's attempts (a reflection of teacher education's emphasis on an inclusive, culturally responsive approach) to make them spokes-people or knowledge brokers of their culture.

Because multiculturalism does not interrogate the construction of knowledge, but is based on the assumption that knowledge is objective, neutral and universal, many of the pedagogies, such as active class participation, collaborative group work and anti-authoritarianism, that developed in response to the implementation of multiculturalism in schools are themselves culture-laden (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). Duff's (2002) study revealed that local native English speakers, both from majority and visible minority cultures, dominated classroom discourse, reflecting the learned classroom behaviours and expectations. On the other hand, non-English speakers were marginalized by the attitudes and interactions of their classmates. Duff concludes with a warning that "large numbers of minority [language] students in schools worldwide are at a considerable risk of alienation, isolation and failure because of the discourse and interactions that surround them on a daily basis" (p. 316). Kalantzis and Cope (1999) go even further, by declaring liberal, progressive pedagogy to be deceptive since it gives the appearance of anti-authoritarianism but has strict rules that are hard to read, so minority students react to the seeming absence of authority because they can't read the cultural cues that demand obedience and conformity. Because the dominant culture regards these discourses as neutral, instead of culturally-laden, the possibility of effective and insightful dialogue across cultures is reduced.

Moreover, the enthusiasm in affirming diversity can result in a cultural relativistic approach whereby all and every aspect of a culture is respected and valued (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Moodley, 1995; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994). Yet Moodley (1995) contends that cultural heritage can be a barrier in a new society and that some aspects of a culture can and should be discarded as being culture-specific to another

time and place. Taylor (1994) also cautions not to patronize cultures by making

prematurely favourable judgements in order to reverse the negative images of the past since

this results in an inauthentic and homogenized rendition of the culture which is in itself

disrespectful.

Despite apparent differences, both assimilationist and superficial multicultural

narratives have the same end goal, namely creating stability and social cohesion in a period

of crisis. Consequently the material conditions of inequality and relations of power and

subordination remain largely untouched. Kubota (2004) explains that ESL educators tend

to see themselves as sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity, yet their position usually

embraces a liberal perspective on multiculturalism. She recommends they transcend the

colour-blind arguments on equality and inclusion which often result in reproducing the

Self/Other binary.

2.4.3 Anti-racist education theories

As a white, former South African, educated and socialized within an overtly racist

authoritarian system, anti-racist critiques of "white privilege" were helpful in my study,

especially as I was exploring my own identity, practices and influences in the classroom.

These theorists argue that because it has been normalized "white privilege" is not

scrutinized as an unequal way of gaining easy access to power and resources in the

dominant society (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dei, 1996, 2000; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Kubota,

2004; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Sleeter, 1995). Understanding "white privilege"

necessitates an examination of the history of slavery, colonialism and the representation of

knowledge. Dei (2000) states that "our vision should be one in which no group has an

automatic right to privilege, supremacy and a disproportionate share of the valued goods

and services of society" (p. 29). Similarly, Kubota (2004) argues that "whiteness"

"constitutes a hidden norm and universal standard against which all Others are racially and

culturally marked" (p. 41). In her article "Blind Vision," Cochran-Smith (2000) describes

her experience as a white teacher trainer confronting her own unintentional racism inherent

in her teaching. She emphasizes the need "to interrogate the assumptions that are deeply

embedded in the curriculum, to own our own complicity in maintaining existing systems of

privilege and oppression, and to grapple with our own failure" (p. 178).

However, Dei (1996) and Wright (2000) recognize the need to forge alliances rather

than split into an accuser/accused binary. Dei states: "Whiteness has a history of

unquestioned access that most other races do not have. Whites need to join the struggle for

anti-racist change, recognizing both their privileged positions and how they can use these

positions to advance the cause of social justice and transformative change in society" (p.

50). Carrim and Soudien (1999) also recommend avoiding essentialism in discussions of

whiteness. Drawing on their own South African context, they acknowledge the multiple

ways racism is manifest while simultaneously emphasizing "race" as an important category

with a lingering destructive legacy. Similarly, Rattansi (1999) contends that anti-racist

theories should postulate a postmodern conception of identity and difference which

embraces a multiplicity of racism and its complex, sometimes contradictory articulation

with other forms of identity, discrimination and inequality.

Dei (1996, 2000) agrees, outlining an *integrative anti-racist* framework that links

"race" to other forms of disadvantage, such as class, gender, ability and sexual orientation.

However, "race" should still be foregrounded as a significant category of oppression since

the effects of racism in terms of job opportunities and wage differentials are far more

profound than other forms of oppression. He points out that for blacks and other visible minorities there is a conflict between the professed egalitarian values of North American democracy and the sharp inequalities in a society which has a profound racist history and where institutional racism still exists.

Moodley (1999) believes that racism in Canada is more subtle than elsewhere, operating within a culture of "politeness" and "tolerance." She contends that "Canadian racism nowadays expresses itself less in direct personal discrimination and much more in a cultivated social distance to the constructed 'other'" (p. 143). She explains that the majority Franco/Anglo cultures give the impression of "owning" the country, so the "…'visibly different' are expected to be forever grateful for having been let in. They are seen to never truly belong,…eternal trespassers, both in view of the dominant group but also sometimes in the eyes of the 'intruders' who internalize majority attitudes towards them" (p. 144).

2.5 Cultural theories

2.5.1 Identity politics

Integral to the cultural theories which guide my research is the notion that cultural differences and values should be recognized and respected through dialogue with others. Taylor (1994) argues that non-recognition or misrecognition is not only disrespectful but also harmful, "imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being… They have internalized a picture of their own inferiority, so that even when the obstacles to their advancement fall away, they may be incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities" (p. 25). However, these discussions are only possible among equals who show equal respect, curiosity and sympathy for each other (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994).

Achieving equal status may involve acknowledgement of past and present oppression and compensation for past oppressive behaviours as well as measures to protect vulnerable minorities. Underlying this theory is the distinction between universalism, namely treating everyone equally and the politics of difference which recognizes the unique identity of individuals or groups which have been ignored or assimilated into a dominant or majority identity. Under universalism, upholding a "common" culture and treating everyone as equal results in advantage for the dominant group. On the other hand, the politics of difference acknowledges that differential treatment in the form of redistributive programs, such as affirmative action may be necessary in order to compensate for past disadvantage and establish true equality. This may require some sacrifices from the dominant group, but these are justified as compensation for historic disadvantage and neglect. However, the need for these measures should diminish over time as disadvantage is overcome, wealth and opportunities have been genuinely redistributed and recognition among equals is achieved (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994).

While critics contend that such differential treatment contradicts liberalism's belief in the sacredness of "equality for all," Taylor (1994) maintains that the politics of difference or recognition is also liberal since he distinguishes between two kinds of liberalism – procedural, which rejects difference and collective goals and insists on uniformity of rules and universal rights, without exception; and substantive liberalism which accepts fundamental rights as inviolable, but also acknowledges the integrity of cultures and the need to vary the universal application of rights.

Kymlicka (1995, 1998) contends that minorities should not all be lumped together, but distinguished by their specific histories, locations, lived experiences and different

demands for accommodation. He distinguishes between involuntary and voluntary minorities. The former, consisting of formerly conquered or colonized people, comprise multination states, such as Quebec and the First Nations of Canada, and often demand some kind of self-government. Voluntary or poly-ethnic minorities, such as immigrants, on the other hand, lobby for greater rights in order to be included in mainstream political and academic life. Consequently, differential policies that apply to some minority groups, do not necessarily apply to other voluntary or involuntary minorities. For example, affirmative action, which addresses the historical disadvantage suffered by Blacks and other marginalized minorities, helps to improve their job prospects in order to reduce the cycle of poverty. But this does not mean that all visible minorities should receive preferential job prospects if they have no historical claim to disadvantage, no cycle of poverty or educational failure.

However, Kymlicka's position does not take into account the colonial legacy, which has created an economic and psychological dependency on, and veneration of, the Westernized, developed world. Thus Kymlicka's definition of "voluntary immigrants" is problematic. Moreover, it doesn't address the ways new immigrants from groups who suffered historic racism can also be excluded because of some distinguishable feature. In Canada, this has often taken the form of exclusion from the job market through restrictions on qualifications and extensive retraining requirements.

Kymlicka (1995) believes that the claim by national minorities, such as the Quebecois or First Nations, to maintain their cultures is a basic human right that should be accommodated within liberalism. However, he rejects liberals' fear that extending rights to such national minorities would lead to similar demands from immigrants. He contends that

immigrants do not seek and do not want that amount of autonomy. He states that "for the children of immigrants, it is the anglophone culture which defines their options, not the culture from which their parents uprooted themselves" (p. 79). Kymlicka argues that the dominant culture has a responsibility to be hospitable to immigrants, help them to express their ethnic identity and provide them with the means to access the economic, political and social resources of the mainstream. Ways of facilitating integration and equity for immigrants include affirmative action policies, curricula revisions, flexibility in both work schedules and dress codes to accommodate religious beliefs, anti-harassment codes, cultural diversity training programs, access to language and adult literacy programs, and government funding of ethnic festivals and studies.

Kymlicka (1998) disagrees that multiculturalism has led to ethnic fragmentation. On the contrary, citizenship, political representation, intermarriage rates and demands for second language training have increased since Canada's multiculturalism legislation came into force ("Canada Multiculturalism Act," 1985), all of which show a desire to integrate rather than isolate. In addition, the demand for turbans in the RCMP, for example, did not indicate any disrespect for a national symbol, but rather expressed a desire to participate in a national institution (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998). In order to achieve a common national identity, Kymlicka (1995) turns to Taylor's notion of "deep diversity". The common bond would arise from people valuing such diversity and wanting to "live in a country with diverse forms of cultural and political membership" (p. 191).

2.5.2 Towards a "third" space

Since a core element of a critical pedagogy lies in challenging and transforming hegemonic conditions, in a multicultural language class this could involve questioning

taken-for-granted hegemonic cultural practices and assumptions. Consequently, cultural theories that emphasize the dynamic and fluid nature of minority cultures which can adapt to new contexts (Levinson & Holland, 1996) were pertinent to my study. Bhabha (1990) describes multiple, shifting identities or a "third space" where identity is located. For border-crossing immigrants this could comprise both the birth /home culture and the adopted host culture. Rattansi (1999) explains how modernity has led to a destabilization of identities and a continuous reinvention of traditions and globalization has eroded old boundaries and led to the formation of new, hybrid transnational identities.

These theories are informed by the notion of "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1991; May, 1999), the deeply internalized pattern of behaviours which cause people to do things in certain ways. However, Bourdieu (1998) emphasizes that "habitus" *orients* rather than *determines* behaviour since there are a range of choices within the internalized framework. While "habitus" is the product of early socialization, it is continually changing in response to ongoing experiences and changing external conditions. Bourdieu argues that the process of change, if it does occur, is very slow because actions are more likely to reproduce than transform. Nevertheless, he recognizes the potential for people to actively challenge "commonsense" discourses and change the status quo. May (1999) explains that as a product of history, habitus normalizes particular cultural practices but this doesn't detract from the potential for transformation and change.

Kramsch (1993) argues that in the language classroom, there is always a potential for conflict when one culture enters into contact with another. She suggests language teachers recognize the complexity and ambiguity of such a context and not search for exact measurements of pedagogical competence or immediate and clear intercultural

understandings. She recommends language teachers construct cultural dialogical learning

activities where the goal is not to find solutions or offer any certainties, nor resolve any

conflicts but rather to engage in a dialectical process that may result in cultural shift to a

new place, "a third place" that is different from both the target culture and the home culture

– the new knowledge creates a tension or struggle with the previously held knowledges and

assumptions, provoking new insights. Kramsch explains: "From the clash between the

familiar meanings of the native culture and the unexpected meanings of the target culture,

meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized"

(p. 238). Kramsch states that this process takes time and can be both elating and deeply

troubling, but teachers should strive for the "personal moments of dialogic insights that can

bring both pain and pleasure, both shock and amazement" (p. 246).

Parekh (2006) also maintains that cultures are dynamic and fluid, not static and

unchanging and cultures are themselves diverse. Different cultures have different systems

of meaning and visions of the good life. However, they are capable of changing, evolving

and transforming through contact with other cultures. While humans are deeply embedded

in their culture, they are not determined by it in an uncritical way. They have the ability to

evaluate their beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, they are deeply influenced by their

culture and can overcome some but not all of its influences.

According to Parekh, cultures are not equally rich and deserving of respect, nor good

for all their members. But no cultures are worthless and none has the right to impose itself

on others. Many scholars believe that change should happen within the cultural group itself,

with perhaps outside support. In order to avoid the extremes of cultural relativism, in which

all traditional practices and values must be tolerated on the one hand, and ethnocentric

prejudice on the other, there should be a shared commitment to dialogue among equals in which cultural practices and values can be compared and evaluated (Kymlicka, 1995; May, 1999; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994).

Kymlicka (1995) argues that contemporary liberalism should distinguish between internal restrictions of rights and external protection. Internal restrictions are imposed by the group itself on its own members in order to protect against internal dissent such as the "decision of group members not to follow traditional practices or customs" (p. 35). Often these restrictions are justified in the name of collective rights and group solidarity on the grounds that they protect the quintessential aspects of the cultural group. This argument is often used in order to maintain theocratic and patriarchal cultures "where women are oppressed and religious orthodoxy legally enforced" (p. 36). Kymlicka regards these impositions in the name of collective rights to be undemocratic. External protection, on the other hand, is used to protect the group from the majority decisions which could threaten the survival of the minority group. He argues that "liberals can and should endorse certain external protections, where they promote fairness between groups, but should reject internal restrictions which limit the right of group members to question and revise traditional authorities and practices" (p. 37).

Kymlicka (1998) maintains that Canadian multiculturalism hasn't made it explicit that there are limits to accommodation and minority rights and that immigrants also have an obligation to uphold liberal-democratic institutions. Modood (2001) agrees, noting that minorities often desire to understand more clearly what is socially and politically acceptable.

2.5.3 Critical multiculturalism

Critical multiculturalism retains many positive aspects of superficial multiculturalism – celebration of diversity, pedagogical shifts to be more inclusive, relevant and active in curricula, classrooms and schools, exploration of alternatives to tracking and standardized testing. In addition, however, like other critical theories it acknowledges the power relations within society, questions the myth of the "neutral" state, and encourages agency, recognizing that public institutions such as schools can be the sites of struggle for equality, not just dominance (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kubota, 2004; May, 1999; Nieto, 1999, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). It tries to avoid essentializing cultures by recognizing that cultures are not homogeneous, but dynamic and changing (May, 1999; Nieto, 2004). Nieto explains the need to problematize a simplistic focus on "celebrating diversity" and passively accepting the status quo of any culture; she encourages "dangerous discourses," stating "…a critical multicultural perspective demands that schools become sites of freedom to learn even controversial issues" (Nieto, 1999, p. 209).

Theorists also articulate the need for the dominant host culture to scrutinize its own values and practices which can and should transform in response to the new realities of a pluralistic, postmodern world. By developing a "reflexive critique" of *all* cultural practices, May believes cultural relativism can be avoided. It also implies that cultures are not static and historically bounded but they are capable of changing to accommodate the modern world. Such a reflexive multiculturalism recognizes the dynamic aspect of culture and encourages transformation both in dominant and minority cultures.

May (1999) suggests that such a position "must foster students who can engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including their own" (p. 33). This

involves a dialogic interrelationship between "shifting" and "rooting". May explains: "Each participant in the dialogue brings with them the rooting in their own grouping and identity, but tries at the same time to shift in order to put themselves in a situation of exchange with those who have different groupings and identities" (p. 34). Diversity should become a core value, deeply embedded and pervasive throughout the mainstream, including educational institutions. Many scholars argue that this is not just desirable for minority students, but crucial also for majority students who have to negotiate an increasingly diverse and globalized world (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kymlicka, 1995; May, 1999; Taylor, 1994).

Kumashiro (2002) cautions that critical multiculturalism should be self-critical to avoid replacing a social hegemony with an academic one in which the intellectual determines what the student needs to overcome oppression. According to Kumashiro, "naming of difference in activist communities or inclusive curricula, can serve less to describe who a group is, and more to prescribe who a group ought to be" (p. 57). Kumashiro argues that oppression is caused by continual repetition of certain discourses which reproduce hierarchies and their harmful effects. It is more comfortable to affirm and confirm these discourses which we have internalized as the way things ought to be since to confront them implies our own complicity. He explains, "[l]earning that the very ways in which we think and do things is not only partial but oppressive involves 'troubling' or unlearning what we have already learned, and this can be quite an emotionally discomforting process, a form of 'crisis' " (p. 63). But he believes that if we want to challenge or resist oppression, educators and students must problematize "normal" and "normative" even if this precipitates a crisis – it is only by moving through "crisis" that transformation is possible. He acknowledges that oppression is multilayered and situated

and therefore always contains an element of unknowability which should be accepted. Rather than pretending we can solve all the problems, we must constantly question our own discourses and look for new strategies.

2.6 Summary

Assimilationist theorists address cultural diversity by encouraging ethnic groups to adopt Western culture and tradition and the Western values of freedom, liberty and equality which they believe everybody wants. This will create a "common" culture which will result in a more united and cohesive society. However, the weakness in this perspective is that it assumes everyone has the same vision of a "good" society. Moreover, it is premised on the notion of society as a level playing field, accessible to all equally. It overlooks the fact that the common culture advantages the dominant group and excludes the non-dominant minorities. This perspective continues to flourish in most Western countries, especially in the education system, either overtly or covertly.

Maintaining, developing and respecting all cultures have become key elements of the liberal multicultural narrative. However, since it also affirms the neutrality of public space, which in reality is the domain of the dominant group, it has done nothing to interrupt the hegemonic status quo. In this respect, it remains essentially assimilationist since other cultures are only fully accepted if they conform to a prescriptive Western liberal discourse. Moreover, by ignoring the dynamic, fluid and heterogeneous qualities of cultures, it essentializes cultures, limiting cultural members' access to a variety of identities. A further weakness of multiculturalism is its potential to affirm every aspect of a culture in the effort to embrace and promote diversity.

In contrast, anti-racist education prioritizes "race" in challenging the unequal

distribution of resources, rewards and status in educational institutions. However, in order

to move beyond the black/white binary, anti-racist education links racial oppression to other

forms of exclusion such as class, gender, ability and sexual orientation. It also

problematizes the taken-for-granted privilege that accompanies "whiteness."

Critical multiculturalism embraces diversity and inclusivity, but avoids essentializing

cultures by recognizing their heterogeneity and potential for change. It acknowledges the

unequal power relations within society, so rejects the "neutral" public domain which serves

the interests of the dominant Western culture. While acknowledging racial and class

oppression, it focuses on the many overlapping, changing and different ways inequality and

marginalization is manifest in our complex, globalized, postmodern world. Critical

multiculturalism integrates a social justice agenda which encourages educators, students and

citizens to constantly challenge social stratification. It avoids criticism of "social justice" as

a Western construct, by developing a reflexive critique of the values and practices of both

minority *and* dominant cultures. It encourages diversity as a core value, deeply embedded

and pervasive throughout the mainstream, including educational institutions. Finally, while

constantly questioning our discourses, and looking for new strategies, we should also accept

there are no neat and tidy answers because of the complex and contradictory nature of

oppression and social justice.

2.7 Relating the theoretical framework to my research questions

Critical language theories and the theories that influenced them – social theories of

power, critical education theories, postcolonialism, postmodernism, feminist theories and

Freirean liberatory theories – provided a framework within which I could undertake my research and address the following questions:

1. What are my students' and my own conceptions of social justice and transformation?

2. In what ways, if any, do students challenge unfairness and inequalities in the classroom, the educational institution and in their everyday lives?

In addition, the limitations and challenges highlighted in the critiques of critical pedagogies alerted me to some of the pitfalls I was likely to encounter in researching my own critically-oriented pedagogy.

However, since my class is located within a multicultural context, drawing on cultural and identity theories, and critical multicultural and anti-racist educational theories, provided another essential lens through which to analyze my data. Critical multiculturalism acknowledges power differentials in society and demands equality through the recognition, respect and accommodation of cultural, ethnic, racial and other differences. However, it views culture as dynamic, and fluid, and encourages a critique of *all* cultures, both the dominant and minority. Critical multiculturalism seeks to transform the mainstream by making diversity a core concept, not relegated to the margins. However, it also rejects a homogenized discourse to address oppression and inequality in our highly complex, modern society, but legitimately calls for multiple, sometimes contradictory, overlapping, articulating discourses, contextually grounded.

These theories are pertinent to my study, which is situated in a multicultural class located in a university that, while serving a multicultural student body and communities, retains an essentially white, Westernized ethos and faculty who predominantly embrace

liberal multicultural perspectives. These theories also speak to the following research concerns:

1. Are students pressured to conform to the norms of Western individualistic liberalism, which is overtly or covertly conveyed through the teacher, school ethos, curricula, tests and textbooks?

2. How do students from diverse cultural, political and economic systems resolve difficulties and differences on controversial sociopolitical topics?

3. Are students able to challenge hegemonic cultural assumptions both in their own culture and in the target culture? Are they able to make a cultural shift into a "third space" in which new knowledge competes with previously held assumptions, provoking new insights?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of my study was to investigate how my students and I understood and experienced a classroom that had implemented a critically-oriented pedagogy. The research took place over three semesters in four of my own English-as-a-second language academic preparation classes in a university college, which I have called Northwest University (NWU), located in one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Canada. While my students, both international and immigrants, came from a variety of countries, they were predominantly from the People's Republic of China.

In the following sections I outline the main characteristics of critical ethnography and explain why I think a critical ethnographic case study was the most appropriate methodology for my research. I also discuss my subjectivities as the researcher and how these influenced the research. I then describe the research procedures I followed, situating my research site, introducing my participants, and data collection measures. I end the chapter with a brief discussion of some of the challenges in critical ethnography and how I dealt with them in my own project.

3.1 The main principles of critical ethnography

Critical ethnography, according to its proponents and other research methodologists (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; Talmy, 2005) incorporates many of the key characteristics of conventional ethnography:

- Prolonged engagement in the field

- Participant observation and interviews which enable the researcher to gain an understanding of the views and experiences of phenomena from the perspectives of the participants themselves

- Recurrent and iterative data analysis

- An emergent, recursive relationship between theory, data, research questions and interpretation.

However, critical ethnography diverges from conventional ethnography in significant ways. While acknowledging power differentials in society, critical research also emphasizes that the reproduction of unjust social relations is not inevitable since human actors are capable of resisting, responding to and reinterpreting hierarchical conditions. Consequently, there are possibilities for interventions and transformation. However, the possibilities for agency are always situated, mediated and shaped by the sociopolitical context. Critical researchers are not content with merely describing what they see, but work in collaboration with the participants towards change through "sustained critique and direct action, or praxis" (Talmy, 2010, p. 3). Critical researchers believe that all knowledge is situated locally in terms of particular people, settings, historical time, social situations and power relationships. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) explain "…all knowledge is perspectival, which makes it inevitably subjective and partial, " (p. 62). Consequently, critical researchers favour an openly ideological and reflexive position, explicitly acknowledging their perspectives and constantly interrogating them (Duff, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 1994, 1999; Talmy, 2010). While Anderson (1989) acknowledges that the issue of reflexivity is pertinent to all ethnographic methods, he points out that in critical ethnography it is a dialectical process among the researcher's constructs,

the commonsense assumptions of participants, the research data, the researcher's ideological biases and the historical and structural forces in which the study is situated. Anderson notes that reflexivity can also include the engagement of the reader with the study, which creates a "new signification" (p. 255).

Over the last decades these general principles of critical ethnography have been taken up by applied linguists in the critical pedagogical classroom investigations of researchers such as Benesch (2001), Crookes and Lehner (1998) and Morgan (1997) as well as in the critical ethnographies of Canagarajah (2004) and Talmy (2005) among others.

In the following section I expand on the above description of critical ethnography by outlining why I found this approach to be the most appropriate for my investigation of four critical ESL classes.

3.1.1 Critical ethnography and its implications for my research

Since the purpose of my research was to investigate my former students' perceptions and responses to my critically-oriented language course, it was important to utilize a methodology that prioritizes voice and representation. Like conventional ethnography, critical ethnography incorporates a dialectical tension between emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives, collaborating and building on each other's strengths; the emic perspective is important to gain access to participants' viewpoints, but the etic perspective is needed to make cross-cultural interpretations and identify taken-for-granted cultural patterns (Davis, 1995; Duff, 1995; Hornberger, 1994b; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999).

As a researcher investigating my own students, this emic/etic tension was essential to my study and needed to be carefully considered and negotiated. For example, was there a contradiction between what I believed in my emic position as their teacher and what was

actually happening in the classroom (Duff & Uchida, 1997). How could I adopt more distance in order to effectively critique the socio-cultural and political underpinnings of my classroom life without sacrificing the intimate understanding my insider position gave me? How could I balance my etic position as the final authority in the analysis and written report, with my emic position as one of the participants in the analysis?

A distinguishing feature of *critical* ethnography is that it recognizes the inherent power imbalance in the sociopolitical structures of society; by ignoring or downplaying these relationships, for example between the researcher and the researched, ethnography has the potential to silence and marginalize the researched by not taking into account the impact of power differentials on the participants and how it will affect the data (Ball, 1990; Giroux, 1983; Kenway, 1990; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Ross, 2000). Since I was intimately involved in what unfolded in the classroom, I also observed myself in relationship to my students. Although my experiences and conceptualizations were incorporated into my data and were described and analyzed along with the other participants in my study, at the same time, I was cognizant of my own inherent and inevitable power as the teacher/researcher who made the final decisions both in classroom outcomes and research findings. At the same time, however, the researcher is committed to making the final claims, pronouncements and interpretations. How I attempted to mediate the voice of the analyst as "final authority" became part of my analysis and conclusion (See Chapter 6).

Many scholars have argued that English language teaching and learning are located within a dynamic context of power disparities since language is a powerful political tool, often used as a form of control, persuasion, exclusion and discrimination. Critical ethnography is therefore, a suitable research method for analyzing power relations within

English language classrooms (Auerbach, 1993a, 1995; Canagarajah, 1996, 2005; Davis, 1995; Pennycook, 1994, 1999, 2001; Talmy, 2005; Toohey, 1995; van Lier, 2005).

Critical ethnography assumes that social phenomena at the micro-level are embedded within an historical context and socioeconomic, cultural, and political macrostructures which shape and are shaped by each other. According to Duff (1995), this approach to research provides a "context-rich interpretive orientation to studying social action" (p. 507) which connects sociopolitical/cultural agendas, attitudes and historical changes (macro-level) and the discourse within schools (micro-level). Thus what was happening at the level of my classroom was intertwined with what was happening at the department, institutional and governmental levels and enabled me to investigate the marginalization of ESL students and teachers in education and society and the ways in which our lives intersected with race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other forms of inequalities (Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 1991, 1993a, 2001; Talmy, 2005). However, critical ethnography, drawing from critical social theories, also acknowledges that schools, educators and students do not always passively fit into repressive hierarchies, but can actively interrupt, resist, accommodate and/or change their circumstances (Ahearn, 2001; Apple, 1982, 1999; Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux, 1983; Pennycook, 1999, 2001; Talmy, 2005). This was pertinent to my research since it provided a more nuanced interpretation of the multiple ways ESL students make meaning out of classroom practices, how they negotiate – accommodate, resist, are changed by – a critical pedagogy.

This conceptualization of the dialectical relationship between human agency and social structures, allows for the possibility of intervention and transformation. Thus critical ethnographic research is not designed to provide only a descriptive account of unequal

power relations, but also attempts to reduce inequalities through challenging the status quo

and informing public policies, social movements and political life (Canagarajah, 2005;

Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Duff, 2008; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Holliday, 2004;

Pennycook, 1994; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; Talmy, 2005). According to Fine et al.

(2000), the new purpose of social inquiry "is not only to generate new knowledge, but to

reform 'commonsense' and inform critically public policies, existent social movements and

daily community life" (p. 124).

This was a further reason for choosing to use critical ethnography since my explicit

purpose in investigating students' responses to a critical pedagogy, was not only to add to

the accumulation of data in an under-researched area, but also to expose and reform

inequalities and unfairness within the context of English language learners.

However, this highlights the underlying tension between "research for social justice"

implicit in critical ethnography and validating the epistemologies and perspectives that the

participants bring into the classroom. On the one hand, improving my students' life chances

and influencing policy and practice in the wider university at which I teach, were explicit

goals of my research project. On the other hand, I needed also to acknowledge that what

constitutes "social justice" in a liberal Western university may clash with the values and

perspectives my students bring into the classroom. In negotiating this tension I found

Kincheloe and McLaren's (2000) argument for a "critical postmodernism" that politicizes

difference by situating it in real social and historical contexts useful. They maintain that "if

the postmodern critique is to make a valuable contribution to the notion of schooling as an

emancipatory form of cultural politics it must make connections to those egalitarian

impulses of modernity that contribute to emancipatory democracy" (p. 295). This would

promote a new understanding of how power operates to exclude on the basis of race, class and gender.

In outlining my transformative goals, I was also cognizant of Pennycook's (2004) warning against grand, transformative solutions, preferring instead the idea of alternative possibilities. Olesen (2000) contends that any research for social change needs to be accompanied by a great deal of reflexivity in order to question power and privilege and to look for the ways of uncovering the tensions, contradictions and complexities inherent in such research. These perspectives guided me in addressing some of the tensions, contradictions and controversies that I encountered in my critical study, such as the homophobic, patriarchal, and racist attitudes demonstrated by some students.

Ethnography has been criticized for its lack of objectivity resulting from the close relationship between researcher and participants, the selection process, the filtering of interviews and observations through the researchers' own lenses, the choice of what to analyze and what to ignore from a huge corpus of data, and the imposition of interpretations on the data. Critical researchers have responded by arguing that no research can be completely objective and unbiased since the researcher plays a pivotal role in the research project and must understand his/her subjective role as well as those of her participants. Rather than downplaying human involvement and its influence on the research process, critical ethnography encourages openness and reflection on one's own subjectivities, ideologies and relationships with the researched. Consequently, the researcher must constantly question his/her knowledge, relationships and interpretations (Canagarajah, 2005; Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Duff, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Harklau, 2005; C. Luke & Gore, 1992; Norton-Peirce, 1995b; Olesen, 2000; Reinharz, 1992; Schumacher

& McMillan, 1993). Edge and Richards (1998) maintain, "[f]or data to be authenticated, relevant aspects of the value-system of the researcher need to be explicitly declared – there must be a position, indicative of purpose, and possibly of expectation" (p. 349).

This has important implications for my research since I was scrutinizing my own teaching practice which thus necessitated a high level of self-reflexivity, constant monitoring of my teaching practice and perspectives and how these related to my students/participants. But positioning myself as the subject of my own gaze is a risky undertaking, exposing my vulnerability both personally and professionally (Flemons & Green, 2002; Kiesinger, 2002). As Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain, "[w]e expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices and values" (p. 748). Moreover, as an academic and teacher there is also the fear of appearing self-indulgent, narcissistic, or too individualized to be taken seriously (Sparkes, 2002).

Indeed, Gailey (2000) and Fine et al. (2000) express some reservations about self-reflexivity that has resulted in a swing from the distant researcher to the "self-absorbed Self." They contend that it could entrench the researcher's credentials and authority; in addition, "flooding the text with ruminations about the researcher's subjectivities has the potential to silence the participants" (Fine et al., 2000, p. 109). Moreover, self-disclosure is easier and more culturally appropriate for a relatively privileged, Western researcher who could end up dominating the text, losing the subjects' voices in the process. Gailey (2000) asks: "How do we situate ourselves as ethnographers without overwhelming the voices and perspectives of local people, or irritating the readers with self-indulgent forms of reflection?" (p. 217).

Although now accepted by the academy as a means of acknowledging and dealing with the subjective researcher, the researcher is still caught in an unresolvable bind since the act of choosing what to disclose and what to keep hidden is in itself layered with subjectivity. However, as Gailey advocates, rather than withdrawing from the attempt, I will still engage in this process, accepting that it is essentially flawed. Consequently, in the following section, I explain my own background, experiences and perspectives and how they articulated with those of my students and (fellow) research participants.

3.1.2 My own positionality

Many theorists have discussed "white privilege," arguing that because it has been normalized, it is not scrutinized as an unequal way of gaining easy access to power and resources in the dominant society (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dei, 1996, 2000; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Kubota, 2004; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Sleeter, 1995). As a white middle-class South African/Canadian my life has also been shaped by this "unearned privilege". On the other hand, as an immigrant, othered by my accent and my association with the historically undesirable system of apartheid, I have also experienced "misrecognition" (Taylor, 1994) and misunderstanding. I have been alternately praised (in confidence) for South Africa's former apartheid system, condemned and shunned for it, or introduced as "not like all the rest" (which presumably includes my family and the many activist friends I left behind). None of these positions relate to how I identify myself. Moreover, as an immigrant in Canada, I acknowledge both the feeling of never truly belonging and never truly wanting to belong, understanding the loss this entails. In addition, being an immigrant disempowered me profoundly – I lost my caring familial support network; I was isolated by motherhood,

particularly as we moved constantly in our first seven years in Canada and I was marginalized in low-paying, low-status jobs as an ESL teacher.

Thus I bring to the research both the acknowledgement of inherent privilege and the awareness of the difficulties involved in asserting an identity that is both connected to, and disconnected from one's own culture and nation. As a white anti-apartheid South African activist, I rejected the privileges this society gave me, choosing instead to immigrate to Canada and use my past experiences in a racist society to discuss issues of social justice with my students.

In this way I position myself as multi-dimensional – my present powerful self as researcher/teacher/white/middle-class South African/Canadian juxtaposed with a formerly disempowered immigrant/mother/low-paid ESL teacher. These contradictory identities add greater depth and complexity to my role as a critical researcher. In addition, they facilitate rapport, understanding and empathy between me as a critically-oriented pedagogue and my (mostly) immigrant, (mostly) visible minority, ESL student participants, marginalized in the academy and in society by their outsider position and lack of linguistic and cultural capital. Finally, my multiple identities do not just provide an individual personal narrative, but profoundly connect to the social, exemplifying the ways inequality intersects not only with race and ethnicity, but with class, gender and immigrant status (Flemons & Green, 2002; Gergen & Gergen, 2002).

As my research progressed, I slowly began to realize the futility, even hypocrisy, of trying to do critical work in the classroom without simultaneously addressing and challenging the continued reproduction of inequitable discourses within the wider institution itself. As a teacher in the North American education system, with so much more power

than my students, I had to be their advocate outside of the classroom if I was to have any credibility as a 'criticalist'. This decision echoes Kubota (2004) who states: "In second language education, teachers and researchers need to advocate for the marginalized students in society" (p.47). Similarly, McLaren and Torres (1999) quote Said: "…the intellectual who claims only to write for him or herself or for the sake of pure learning, or abstract science, is not to be, and must not be, believed" (p. 72). I hoped, also, that by taking up a more critically activist role, I could similarly inspire and enlist my ESL colleagues to challenge our systemic marginalization.

Much has been said about the ESL teachers' marginalization within the educational institute, and how teachers are limited in what they can effectively do since they are themselves caught within the web of power (Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 1991, 2001; Covaleskie, 1993; Gore, 1992). Nevertheless, I determined that I would do what I could within my limited circumstances. Although I had always been active in committees, putting myself and my classroom under the critical lens pushed me towards articulating more clearly the connections between the micro- and macro-contexts of classroom-department-institution and society and my multiple identities in all of these: teacher/researcher/colleague/employee.

Although the academic status of the ESL department at Northwest University (NWU) has been slowly eroded over the past decade, the university has maintained an egalitarian participatory system of governance whereby all instructors have equal institutional committee representation, salaries and working conditions. Because of this structure, I am not totally disempowered, but have access to the top administration through the committees

on which I sit. Consequently, I could use these channels to advocate on behalf of ESL students.

One of the most important areas of advocacy in which I participated during my year-long research project was in contesting unfair English proficiency entrance requirements for certain professional re-training programs such as nursing. By drawing attention to and challenging one of the most significant areas of systemic discrimination towards immigrants, namely the linguistic and professional barriers which delay or even prevent re-entry into their profession in Canada, I was responding to CLP's call for critical action (Apple, 1999; Giroux, 1983; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Kubota, 2004; Lather, 1991; McLaren & Torres, 1999).

Secondly, in order to counter the marginalization of ESL students and teachers in the academy, I spearheaded the initiative to obtain university credits for advanced ESL courses. The rationale behind this is based on fairness and recognition. The university does value and award credit for a second language – just not English as a second language, even though the proficiency required to pass ELST at Level 3 is generally higher than the proficiency at the 3rd and 4th levels of other second languages, such as French, Japanese, or German. In addition to validating students' learning, granting credit for ESL would also recognize the professional and academic qualifications needed to teach ESL which equal those of teachers of other modern languages. This is an important piece in attempting to secure an equitable teaching and learning environment for both ESL teachers and students.

Thirdly, I agreed to co-chair the newly-formed Committee for a Multicentric Curriculum (CMC) since it dovetailed with my convictions that diversity needs to be mainstreamed rather than relegated to the periphery. This committee is responding to some

scholars claim that it is no longer acceptable simply to alter the second language learner to fit the environment – the environment must also be changed. The traditional canon needs to be broadened across all disciplines so that diversity becomes a core value in post-secondary institutions (Canagarajah, 2005; Leki, 2001; May, 1999). Consequently, the committee is attempting to "promote the development of students and faculty as global citizens, emphasizing international and indigenous perspectives, cultural diversity, and an informed respect for all peoples through supporting the development and promotion of inclusive curricula, learning, and teaching throughout the university's courses and programs" (*Mandate, Committee for a Multi-centric Curriculum*, 2008, February 25: Approved by Education Council). To genuinely embrace a commitment to "deep diversity," students marginalized by their linguistic proficiency, sexual orientation, ethnicity must move from the periphery to the centre, recognized as a valuable and equal contributor to the socio-cultural and political life of NWU. Moreover, by mainstreaming diversity, embedding it as a core value throughout this university, fears and anxieties generated by difference, can possibly be allayed (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; May, 1999; Taylor, 1994).

While there is still a long road to travel before this is fully achieved, the CMC represents an important beginning.

3.2 "The Case": Situating my study within Northwest University's English Language Studies Diploma Program

I used a case study design because it involves the in-depth investigation of a single phenomenon within its natural setting – in my study this was a single language course in four classes in an English for Academic Purposes Program in a particular post-secondary

institution, which I have named Northwest University (NWU). While such an ethnographic case study represents a particular place, time and context, van Lier (2005) contends that "insights from a case study can inform, be adapted to and provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases, so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account. Furthermore, if two cases provide contradictory information about a certain issue…this contrast can provide much food for thought and further research, thus being of great benefit to the field" (p. 198). In addition, Duff (2008) maintains that case study provides opportunities to acknowledge and account for counter evidence, contradictory, unique or atypical claims all of which may provide insight in the field of second language acquisition and education.

The academic status of the ESL department at NWU has gradually weakened over the past decade despite fierce opposition from its faculty – it was originally housed along with the Modern Languages Department and other university-subject departments in the Humanities Division; it was removed from this division and incorporated with other "preparatory" programs in the Qualifying Studies Division, which upgrades specific skills to meet university entrance requirements. This decision reflects the assumption, based on the "deficiency principle," that pervades the academy – that ESL is viewed as a remedial, rather than an additional, skill such as French or German as a second language.

3.2.1 Description of my course ELST 243

ELST 243, a Level 2, lower-advanced academic listening and speaking skills course, is a required course for the English Language Proficiency Diploma in the English Language Studies Department at NWU. According to the NWU calendar (*Northwest University Calendar*, 2007) "The Diploma Program provides intensive English language study for

students whose first language is not English and who intend to pursue further academic or professional programs." It consists of four levels – Foundation Level (Intermediate), Level 1 (Upper Intermediate), Level 2 (Lower-Advanced) and Level 3 (Advanced). The Diploma consists of 60 credits made up of required courses and electives. At Level 2 students can take one university credit course, and at Level 3 they can take 2 university-credit courses. These courses count as electives towards the overall credits for the Diploma. Students are placed at a particular level in the Diploma Program through a placement test which consists of a writing sample, a reading and grammar test (Accuplacer) and a face-to-face interview.[5]

Generally four sections of ELST 243 run each semester over two campuses. Each section consists of 12-17 students who may be long-term or newly arrived immigrants or international students. Although one campus has a large number of Indo-Canadian students, the vast majority of students in the Diploma Program are from the People's Republic of China. While students' ages vary greatly, the majority are high school and university graduates in their early to mid-twenties. The program is based on a trimester system, each semester running for 14 weeks. ELST 243 is a two-hour class held twice weekly. Thus each class has a total of 56 in-class hours of instruction per semester. In addition, students are expected to spend the equivalent time on out-of-class assignments or research projects. Most of the Diploma students in Level 2 are enrolled in at least one other ESL academic preparation course and one university-credit course. Students who obtain their Diplomas (or pass Level 3) with a B in both of the required courses are admitted into English 100, (a required course for all degrees at NWU) without having to pass any further standardized language tests.

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[5] Students do not *have* to get a diploma, but can register in only the courses they want within the diploma course offerings.

In my ELST 243 course, teachers are expected to follow the official course outline, (See Appendix A: Course Outline), which describes learning objectives, provides broad and general guidelines for content and assessment, and offers suggestions for textbooks. However, within this structured framework there remains ample room for flexibility in order to respond to students' language and personal needs as well as the changing sociopolitical events which may affect students' lives. Since the focus of the official curriculum is on language objectives, there is a lot of freedom for individual teachers regarding content and teaching methodologies. Consequently, the content of my course is never exactly the same from one semester to the next.

In the past there have been two assigned textbooks for this course, *Speaking Solutions* (Matthews, 1994) and *Contemporary Topics 3* (Beglar & Murray, 2002). I use *Speaking Solutions* since it provides useful, structured materials for guiding students in the development of oral communication skills such as roles and responsibilities in small group discussions, group decision-making and problem-posing. It also includes a chapter on rights, obligations and values which I adapted and used in all three semesters as it provides a useful way to open up a dialogue in a multicultural class on human rights, and social justice. I integrate this core text into my own materials, which I often develop from current social issues, and my (past and present) students' experiences which I use in problem-posing interactions.

Contemporary Topics 3 develops note-taking and academic listening skills through lectures on a variety of academic subjects such as anthropology, zoology, and psychology. I chose not to use it as a core text since I found the form of the lectures and skill development to be uncritical and unchallenging. Instead, I try to use aural materials from a

variety of sources such as public talks, forums, film documentaries, radio programs and guest speakers.

Two of my colleagues who were teaching the same course also found the book inadequate, but used it because it reduced preparation time. As one of my colleagues said, "I don't like it either, but it's easy. I have a heavy schedule this semester, so I don't have time to hunt around for more listening materials" (Diary: 02/09/07). As my workload became heavier and heavier with teaching, researching and committee work, I reluctantly fell into the same pattern, and began using some of the lectures, in order to "just get through the semester". Rather than being an indictment on my colleagues (and myself), the difficulty of choosing suitable teaching materials speaks to the reality of teachers' lives and is certainly one of the biggest challenges in teaching a critical pedagogy which lacks appropriate materials and textbooks. As Auerbach (1995) and (Benesch, 1991, 1993a, 2001) have pointed out, ESL teachers often do not have time to endlessly generate new appropriately critical material, nor critically question procedures since they are themselves often marginalized in post-secondary institutions.

The official ELST 243 curriculum focuses on improving students' academic listening and speaking skills. I designed the curriculum in collaboration with my colleagues and have taught it at NWU intermittently for the past six years. The official Course Outline includes learning objectives and examples of content for improving academic listening and speaking skills (See Appendix A: Course Outline).

In addition to embracing a "critically-oriented pedagogy," I believe it is also essential to meet the course objectives as spelled out in the official course outline. The teacher is expected to distill the main contents of this into a Course Presentation and provide every

student with a copy on the first day of class (See Appendix B: Course Presentation). This Presentation contains the course objectives, evaluation, attendance policy and classroom responsibilities and represents a contractual obligation between teacher and student. Moreover, even though there can be a great deal of difference in the content and teaching styles across the sections, all students sit for the same ELST 243 aural/oral final exams, which are collaboratively developed by the course instructors. Ignoring this fact in pursuit of a social justice/liberatory pedagogy, could seriously jeopardize students' future goals.

This view is reflected in the criticism leveled at more progressive, anti-hegemonic schools for de-emphasizing the official knowledge needed by youth to get past the "gatekeeper" into society. Apple and Beane (1995) acknowledge a tension between giving students the cultural capital to be successful and providing a more holistic, progressive and "caring" curriculum. Similarly, while rejecting the "domesticating" nature of schooling (Freire, 2007), Giroux (1983) points out that it is important for the disadvantaged to also develop a functional literacy, analytical and practical skills in order to access advanced industrial capitalism. Other researchers have also pointed out that it is both possible and desirable to integrate language skills into a critical practice (Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Lee, 2007; Morgan, 1992/1993, 2004). In order to balance these sometimes competing claims, I embed the official curriculum into a more critically-oriented content pedagogy which includes topics from some academic disciplines such as business, with themes such as racism, poverty and homelessness, human and cultural rights. I choose most of these themes myself, but try to negotiate others with the students throughout the semester in response to their needs and interests. In addition, students choose their own topics for group projects and individual presentations.

3.3 Data collection: Overview

To ensure that my data would have a variety of relevant material from a number of different sources and to meets ethnography's requirement for a prolonged period of fieldwork, I conducted my research over the course of an academic year, (three semesters) from September 4, 2007 to August 12, 2008. Watson-Gegeo (1988) has noted criticism of brief fieldwork, especially in applied linguistics research, which has sometimes resulted in "….'blitzkrieg ethnography': The researcher 'dive-bombs' into a setting, makes a few fixed-category or entirely impressionistic observations, then takes off again to write up the results" (p. 576).

My data collection consists of the following, which I will outline in greater detail in the following sections:

- student information sheets
- copies of students' individual and group class and homework assignments
- students' oral journals
- audio-taped and transcribed in-class discussions, problem-posing situations, presentations, role plays
- audio-taped and transcribed individual interviews with former students
- official or administrative documents such as course outlines, textbooks
- teacher's documents such as course presentations, handouts, teacher-developed materials, an on-going reflexive journal, memos, notes taken as a normal part of my teaching practice

- documents from committees viz. Senate Standing Committee on Curriculum (SSCC);
  (co-chair) Committee for a Multicentric Curriculum (CMC); (chair) ESL for
  university credits initiative

- minutes from meetings viz. SSCC, CMC, department meetings, Deans' meeting

3.3.1 Selection of participants

At the beginning of each semester, a colleague explained my research project to my students and asked permission to use copies of their class and homework assignments for my study (See Appendix C: Consent form #1).[6] All the students who had taken my ELST 243 courses in each semester were invited to participate in my study. Their consent forms were kept in a sealed and signed envelope in NWU's Office of Research. I accessed these consent forms after the semester was over and I had assigned grades.

Table 3.1 (below) provides a brief summary of my procedure for the selection of participants for my study. It outlines the total number of students in each section in each semester, the drop-outs, the students who gave me permission to use their class and homework and students whom I interviewed. I expand on this information in the sections that follow.

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[6] The purpose of the consent form is to avoid inherent concerns about researching one's own class and classroom practices, that is, to avoid any suggestion that there may have been potential coercion of research participants to agree to take part.

Table 3.1   Summary of procedure for selection of participants

Total number of students	Drop-outs	Students who gave permission to use their class and homework	Interviewees
61	17	49	28
FALL 2007 (Sep.04 – Dec. 13) Section R11: 17 ---------------------- Section R12 : 13	2 ---------- 5	15 ------------------------------- 8 (1 failure – repeated class the following semester)	13 ---------------- 6
SPRING 2008 (January 07-April 21) Section R13: 17	6	15	9
SUMMER 2008 (May 06 – August 12) Section R14: 14	4	12	n/a

My Section R11 class in Fall 2007 began with 17 students but two dropped out in the last two weeks of the semester. All the remaining 15 students gave their consent. In my Section R12 class, 13 students began the class, 5 of whom dropped out at different times during the semester. Of the 8 remaining students, all gave me consent. Consequently, I could include the in-class audio-taping of 22 students in my data, excluding only the students who had dropped out and one student who failed the course and repeated it the following semester.

I then e-mailed all 22 students, reminding them that they had given me permission to use copies of their assignments for my research, and informing them at this time that they were still free to withdraw copies of their assignments if they had changed their minds. I

also invited them to participate further in private interviews. Those who were interested were asked to contact me by e-mail or phone (See Appendix D: Letter of Contact).

Out of the 15 students in R11 who had given me permission to use their class work for my data collection, 13 students e-mailed me that they were willing to be interviewed. Of the two remaining students, one did not respond to my request, and one left the university after failing the course. Of the 8 students in R12 who gave me permission to use their class work, 6 expressed a willingness to be interviewed. Of the remaining two, one did not respond to my request and the other failed the course and repeated it in my R13 section in Spring 2008 semester. I then set up private interviews with the 19 students at which time they signed a second consent form giving me permission to interview and audio-tape them (See Appendix E: Consent Form # 2).

In Spring 2008 semester, I again taught two sections of ELST 243. However, because of the high participation rate in the previous semester, I decided to include only one of the classes (Section R13) in my study, choosing the one that was most ethnically diverse as I hoped this would provide me with more interesting data. The procedure for permission was repeated. Out of a class of 17, 15 students gave me permission to use their class and homework assignments. During the semester 6 students dropped out; of the remaining 11, 9 offered to be interviewed.

To enrich and broaden my data, I decided to continue the research through a third semester, Summer 2008. I followed the same procedure as previously to get permission to use their class work and homework assignments in my project. In this section (R14) I had 14 students, 4 of whom dropped out during the semester. Twelve students gave me permission to use their work. Since I felt I had enough interview data, I used this third

semester only to collect further data from homework assignments and class work, including audio-taped group work.

I transcribed all the audio-taped in-class discussions and small group work done over all the semesters myself since I had been present for the discussions and so could follow the arguments more easily. In addition, I had gotten to know my students very well through the duration of the semesters, so could easily distinguish between the voices and understand the accents – this would have been very challenging for hired transcribers. In total my data collection includes the homework assignments and in-class written and audio-taped work of 49 students over three semesters, September 2007 to August 2008. Out of these participants, I conducted 28 private interviews.

Table 3.2 (below) provides a brief overview of the number of participants, their (approximate) ages, gender and ethnicity.

Table 3.2   Age, gender, and ethnicity of all participants

All participants	Ethnicity	Age range	Gender
49/61 students	PRC = 31 Taiwan = 4 Hong Kong = 3 India = 2 Other = 8	< 26 years of age = 13 26 – 45 years = 16 Unknown = 20	Males = 19 Females = 30
FALL 2007 (Sep.04 – Dec. 13) Sections R11 and R12 22 students	PRC = 16 Pakistan = 1 India =1 Iran = 1 Hong Kong = 2 Taiwan = 1	< 26 years of age = 8 26 – 45 years = 11 Unknown = 3	Males = 10 Females = 12
SPRING 2008 (January 07-April 21) Section R13 15 students	PRC = 10 Japan = 1 Quebec = 1 Korea = 1 Taiwan = 1 West Africa = 1	< 26 years of age = 5 26 – 41 years = 5 Unknown = 5	Males = 4 Females = 11
SUMMER 2008 (May 06 – August 12) Section R14 12 students	PRC = 6 Taiwan = 2 Hong Kong = 1 India= 1 Thailand = 1 Mexico = 1	Unknown	Males = 5 Females = 7

Table 3.3 (below) provides a brief overview of the number of interviewees, their (approximate) ages, gender and ethnicity. I expand on this information in the sections that follow:

Table 3.3   Age, gender, and ethnicity of interviewees

Interviewees	Ethnicity	Age range	Gender
28 students	PRC = 19 Other = 9 (see below)	< 26 years of age = 13 26 – 45 years = 16	Males = 11 Females = 17
From: FALL 2007 Sections R11 and R12 19 students	PRC = 13 Pakistan = 1 India =1 Iran = 1 Hong Kong = 2 Taiwan = 1	< 26 years of age = 8 26 – 45 = 11	Males = 9 Females = 10
From: SPRING 2008 (January 07-April 21) Section R13 9 students	PRC = 6 Quebec = 1 Korea = 1 West Africa = 1	< 26 years of age = 5 26 – 41 = 5	Males = 2 Females = 7

The ages of the 28 interviewees varied considerably, from 19 – 45. Thirteen were in the 19 – 24 age range, 11 in the 26 – 37 age range and 5 in the 40 – 45 age range. There were 11 males and 17 females, 4 of whom were international students, 23 immigrants and 1 Canadian-born. Most of the interviewees (12) had been in Canada for approximately 1 year; 8 students had arrived within the previous six months; 9 had been in Canada for 3 – 5 years and 2 students had been in Canada for 8 – 11 years. The interviewees came from a number of different countries with the vast majority (19) from Mainland China. The exact breakdown of the rest of the participants was Hong Kong (2), India (1), Iran (1), Korea (1), Pakistan (1), Quebec (1) Taiwan (1), and West Africa (1).

These students were very eager to participate in the interviews. Their willingness was partly due to the fact that a good rapport had developed amongst the students in my classes, so they encouraged each other to participate; secondly, I had a warm relationship with them and since they often saw me on campus, they enthusiastically offered to join in the project. However, many of them also said they were eager to practice their English since there were so few opportunities to do so with native English speakers. To have their own English instructor engage in a one-on-one conversation with them for approximately one hour was an opportunity they did not want to pass up.

I used the homework and in-class assignments of the above students plus an additional 21 students, 13 females and 8 males. The ethnic backgrounds of these students were as follows: Mainland China (13), Hong Kong (1), India (1), Japan (1), Mexico (1), Taiwan (3) and Thailand (1). The participants in this group had been in Canada for varying lengths of time: 5 for approximately 1 year; 5 had arrived within the previous six months; 8 had been in the country between 3 – 5 years and 2 had been in Canada for approximately 7 years.

Table 3.4 (next page) is a summary of my entire year of research at NWU. In the following sections, I will explain in more detail the information contained in this table.

Table 3.4   Summary of research procedure

Date and Number of Participants	Description of teaching and other activities	Description of research activities
FALL 2007 **Sept. 04 – Dec. 13** Taught: Section R11: 17 students 8 males, 9 females Section R12: 13 students 6 males, 7 females	• Taught 2 sections (R11 and R12) of a critical language class, (ELST 243) • (112 hours in-class teaching /observing) Meetings: • Senate Standing Committee on Curriculum (SSCC) monthly • Committee for a Multicentric Curriculum (CMC) –co-chair- monthly • ESL for Credits initiative (chair) • English Language Studies Department (monthly) • Chennai Project (chair)	• transcribed students' reflective oral journals • transcribed taped individual presentations • collected and organized official documents • collected and organized teacher-generated materials • kept a reflexive journal
SPRING 2008 **Jan. 07 - Apr. 21** Taught: Section R13 17 students 5 males, 12 females ---------------------- Data collection: Students from Fall 2007 Sect. R11 and 12 Classwork from : 23 students 10 males, 13 females Interviews with: 19 students: 9 males, 10 females	• Teaching tasks same as above • Meetings: (same as above) -----------------------	--------------------------------- • Collected and organized students' written class work and homework assignments) • transcribed audio-taped in –class work • audio-taped private interviews (45 minutes - 1hour) • transcribed 4 taped interviews • checked 15 professionally transcriptions • kept a reflexive journal

Table 3.4   Summary of research procedure (continued)

Date and Number of Participants	Description of teaching and other activities	Description of research activities
SUMMER 2008 May 06 – Aug.12 Taught: Section R14: 14 students 7 males, 7 females ----------------------- Data collection: Students from Spring 2008 Section R13: Classwork from: 15 students 4 males, 11 females Interviews with: 9 students 2 males, 7 females	• Teaching tasks same as above • Meetings: (same as above) -----------------------	----------------------- • collected and organized students' written class work and homework assignments • audio-taped private interviews (45 minutes - 1hour) • had them professionally transcribed • transcribed audio-taped in-class work) • kept a reflexive journal
----------------------- **AUGUST 12 – 25 (after summer semester ends)** Data collection: Students from Section R14: Work from: 12 students 5 males, 7 females	-----------------------------	------------------------ • collected and organized students' written class work and homework assignments • transcribed audio-taped in-class work

3.3.2 Textual data

Textual data for my project consisted of student information sheets, which provided

me with general information about my students' ethnicity, educational background, years in

Canada and future academic goals (See Appendix F: Student Information Sheet). My

textual data also included copies of students' individual class and homework assignments,

individual presentations, oral and written reflective journals, and group work in which

students wrote notes and/or outlines on chart paper of group discussions which they presented to the class. In the first two semesters, my students submitted three oral journals of approximately 5 – 8 minutes each which were responses to topics we had discussed in class. In the first semester, I transcribed their first submissions. However, since this was a very time-consuming task, I opted instead for storing their oral journals in my audio files. I also asked the students to write a brief outline before recording their journals. This helped them to organize their thoughts before speaking and also provided me with more written data. In my third semester, I did not use oral journals due to time constraints.

One of the major challenges in collecting data from my own students was that I did not know until the semester was over who was going to give me permission to use their work for my research. Consequently, I photocopied student assignments I thought might be useful, and kept the chart paper students had used in their discussions and presentations. I also audio-taped some group discussions, whole class dialogical interactions, debates, role plays and individual presentations, using these recordings to promote students' speaking skills.

In my first semester of data collection (Fall 2007), I used this tactic only intermittently, cognizant of the fact that I would have to discard any data that students had not given me permission to use. However, since all the students who completed the course gave me permission to use their work, I began photocopying more of their work during the following semester as well as audio-taping more in-class activities. In fact, over three semesters, I received permission from 49 out of a total of 61 students.

In addition, I asked the students whom I interviewed if I could borrow their binders, containing their class and homework assignments, for my research. Most of them agreed

although a few had lost or discarded their binders before the interviews took place. This, together with the data I had collected myself during each of the three semesters, provided me with a rich and varied body of student work.

In addition, I collected administrative documents such as the ELST 243 course outline, and photocopied extracts from the assigned textbooks, *Speaking Solutions* and *Contemporary Topics.* I also included in my data the class materials I created myself, memos and notes I made about my students during the semester.

Finally, I kept a research journal throughout my study in which I reflected on my daily lessons, classroom practice and research project, the challenges these generated and my personal reactions to all these events. Sometimes the journal was a burden – just another thing to do at the end of a long day or tiring week – and I resented it. However, now that the process is over, I am glad that I pushed myself to maintain it regularly. For me its greatest contribution was not to record concrete observations, notes, memos that fell outside the formal observations I made during the research. Rather it charted my affective reactions to events, situations, and happenings. Comparing and contrasting these reactions from an emotional distance, has added another layer of understanding to my analysis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In addition, my data includes the relevant minutes from two university committees on which I serve: the Senate Standing Committee on Curriculum (SSCC) and the Committee for a Multi-centric Curriculum (CMC), and department meetings. I also kept notes from the Deans' and Vice – Presidents' meeting at which I had been invited to make a presentation. Finally, as the instigator of the "ESL for university credits" initiative and the Chennai

Project[7], I held meetings with faculty both within and outside my own department. The minutes and notes from these meetings are also part of my data.

3.3.3 Participant observation

Participant observation is a central part of data collection in ethnographic research (Delamont, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Duff, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Hornberger, 1994b). As a teacher/researcher, my participation was intense since I was actively involved in the day-to-day happenings in the class over three semesters. In the normal course of being a teacher, I was able to listen and observe my students in their group interactions, make adjustments to my practice based on classroom events, reflect on my lessons, noting in my journal and on my lesson plans what worked and what didn't and why. Although I didn't take field notes, often considered an important tool in ethnographic studies, I believe the absence of a researcher scribbling in a corner has some advantages since it creates a more natural environment. As Canagarajah (1999) observes, "[t]he mere presence of a non-member is enough to activate certain social dynamics that may alter the everyday life of the community" (in Lee, 2007, p. 82).

As soon after the class as feasible, I took notes about the previous class. These notes, the data from students' homework and classwork and my own teaching materials which I used extensively became effective memory prompts in recreating classroom life. Also, as mentioned in the above section, I made use of extensive in-class audio-taping of group discussions, whole class dialogical interactions, role plays, debates and presentations which I transcribed myself. I have used these transcriptions in my analysis both to observe my students in their classroom interactions and to "observe" myself as teacher/facilitator. My

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[7] I initiated this as a joint faculty-student project to sponsor a school in Chennai, India that had been damaged after the 2004 tsunami.

participation as a teacher/observer in ELST 243 Listening/Speaking course amounted to 112

hours in two sections of the course in the first semester (Fall, 2007), 56 hours in one section

in the second semester (Spring 2008) and 56 hours in one section in the third semester

(Summer, 2008) for a total of 224 hours over one academic year.

Instead of asking my colleagues to observe my classes, I opted for more extensive use

of audio-taping class interactions. This seemed to me to be less onerous for my colleagues,

less intrusive both to me and my students and more readily captured teaching moments than

the arbitrary class visits of an outside observer. The disadvantage of this choice was that I

needed to be extremely scrupulous in scrutinizing and interpreting my own actions in the

classroom and I acknowledge that I may in fact not have been able to do this entirely. In

order to compensate for this lack of etic perspective, I have tried to incorporate extensive

direct quotations from classroom interactions, so that the readers can judge and interpret for

themselves.   In this way, the reader becomes a co-participant in the interpretation of my

data, rather than a traditional passive receiver of knowledge (Ellis & Bochner, 2000;

Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

The themes generated were:

i)   whether students resisted or accommodated CLP – what this means and how it

manifested itself,

ii) how students negotiated meaning and differences in problem-posing dialogues,

iii) the extent they drew on personal experiences and the impact this had on the group,

iv) whether they had the requisite language proficiency to discuss controversial and

socio-cultural issues,

v) how they exhibited agency i.e. how they formed opinions, challenged normalized assumptions, and took action,

vi) the extent to which I participated in discussions and the impact of my participation and

vii) how I handled any tension between my perspectives and my students.

3.3.4 Private interviews

A core component of the ethnographic approach is gaining access to participants' personal and ideological standpoints through in-depth interviews, focus groups, students' narratives and reflections which all provide emic (insider) perspectives on the research problem and questions (Delamont, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Duff, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Hornberger, 1994b). Interviews have traditionally been regarded as a neutral site in which information is passed verbally between researcher as the neutral questioner and interviewee as a passive repository of answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). However, this perspective has increasingly been problematized, with interviewers and interviewees implicated in collaboratively creating meanings. Holstein and Gubrium explain: "Treating interviewing as a social encounter in which knowledge is actively constructed suggests the possibility that the interview is not a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but rather a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge" (p. 141). What counts in the active interview is how and what meanings are collaboratively produced within the situated circumstances of the particular interview. Talmy (in press) maintains that by ignoring the role of the interviewer and the speech event itself in the production of data, many insights regarding the data, analysis and interpretation are lost.

This reconceptualization of the interview has important implications for my ethnographic case study, which relied heavily on interviews. It alerted me to the importance of reflexivity, and of acknowledging power disparities by asking how I, as the interviewee/ white female/former teacher, influenced the production of the interview data. It also had implications for my analysis. The model of an active respondent in a dynamic interaction with the interviewer challenges the call for "objective truth" or "correct answers" in the responses, the goal of conventional interviews and the "proof" for data reliability and validity. In the "active interview" neither the interviewers nor the respondents can "contaminate" the data since they have been actively and subjectively involved in creating it. Thus what students say they did becomes part of what constitutes the co-construction of information between interviewer and interviewee (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Talmy, in press). Although I did not consistently analyze my data or frame my comments in ways that suggest that what participants said might not always be completely representative of their perspectives, it is an important consideration.

I conducted private interviews with 28 former students. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. These interviews were held in small meeting rooms on campus in order not to inconvenience the participants. I held a couple in the cafeteria, thinking it would be a more relaxed and friendly environment, but the noise made later transcribing very difficult, so I decided against this option. However, I usually met the participant in the cafeteria, offered to buy them a beverage and a snack and we walked together to the interview room. This allowed me to break the ice, catch up with my former students' personal news and set us up for an informal interview.

I conducted the first batch of interviews during the Spring semester (January – April, 2008). The interviewees consisted of 19 former students from my Fall 2007 ELST 243 course, 13 from Section R11 and 6 from R12. I conducted the second batch of interviews during the Summer semester (May – August 2008). The 9 interviewees were drawn from my Spring 2008 ELST 243 Section R13 course. Since I had obtained a large sampling of interviewees in the previous semester, I had focused my research on only one class during the Spring 2008 semester. Although I taught ELST 243 again in the Summer 2008 and used the in-class data for my research, I decided that 28 focal interviews were sufficient.

A qualitative approach argues against a strict adherence to a clearly-defined research problem and accompanying questions so as to give space for the unfolding of knowledge and information in its most natural form (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Consequently, although my interview questions revolved around foreshadowed problems, they were open-ended to ensure the flexibility necessary to give preference to the voice and actions of the researched (See Appendix G: Interview Guidelines). I did not follow the questions in any numerical order, nor look at my Interview Guidelines during the interview, but rather embedded the questions in a general conversation I had with each interviewee. At the end of each interview, I generally asked my interviewee to give me a moment to glance at my questions to ensure I hadn't left out anything. One student responded to this technique by explaining:

> *I don't like to go through one point per point. If you go like point by point, I would try to give you the right answer. I would try to give you what you want…. But because you're going like a conversation, then everybody [gives you] their personal opinion.*
> (Simon (24)[8]: Interview 19/06/08)[9]

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[8] Designates age of student
[9] Day/Month/Year

I audio-taped the interviews on a Sony ICD – P520 and stored them in an audio–file on my computer. I transcribed six interviews myself and had 22 professionally transcribed word-for-word, including non-verbal responses such as laughter, grunts and fillers. I checked these immediately on completion against the audio-recordings on file, making changes where necessary and adding any pertinent personal notes and observations. In order to ensure confidentiality, the transcribers signed confidentiality agreements, returned all hard copies of the interviews and agreed to delete their e-files.

I did not follow up with focus group interviews as I had originally intended since I did not feel they would yield richer or more meaningful information than I had already obtained from the private interviews. On the contrary, I believed they might compromise anonymity and inhibit many forthright discussions that had evolved during the private interviews.

3.4 Analysis

For the ethnographic study to be more than simply a collection of descriptive and anecdotal material, the researcher has to control the data and analyze it within a conceptual framework in order to make sense of the information change to (Ayers, 1989). The analysis does not adhere to a central hypothesis that must be proved through deductive reasoning; instead it incorporates inductive interpretations that emerge through the research process and constantly relate back and forth between the theory and data, with theory guiding but not controlling the research. Questions are reviewed throughout the data collection process and reformulated if necessary. This flexibility in the investigative process may generate new hypotheses, models and understandings of language learning, building theory in this

field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999).

This openness to inductive interpretations is particularly pertinent to my study since to date there has been little research on critical language pedagogy and the ways it is conceptualized and negotiated by students and teachers in a critical language classroom (Lee, 2007; Moorthy, 2006).

Nevertheless, as in other approaches, the researcher must clearly articulate the theoretical framework which guides but doesn't control the research since each situation under investigation is unique and contextualized. In addition, the researcher must explain the relationship between the study and other published research, the chain of reasoning connecting data to theory, interpretations to findings, and the theoretical contributions the research makes to the field (Duff, 2008; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Watson-Gegeo, 1988).

In my analysis I draw on two different theoretical frameworks, critical multicultural theories and critical language education theories, in order to understand and interpret an ESL multicultural classroom. Since critical multicultural theories have not routinely been applied to investigations of second language classroom, an inductive approach allows more space for unanticipated outcomes.

The first step was to familiarize myself with the whole corpus of data. This was facilitated by the fact that I was researching my own (former) students and my own classroom practice. Consequently, I was already familiar with a lot of the classroom data – audio-taped discussions, written class and homework assignments – which I could readily refer to during the interviews in the subsequent semester. Since I had co-written the ELST

243 course outline and taught the course at least six times, I knew the course description and objectives and assigned textbooks very well. In addition, I had developed a lot of my own materials for the course. I was also very familiar with other documents that I used as data – administrative and committee documents, including minutes – as I have been teaching at this university and sitting on its various committees since 1999. This familiarity with the data enabled me to move easily among the different types of data, looking for validation, contrast and contradiction in order to build on developing ideas.

I used a separate container to store the hard copies of the data for each class in each semester – ELST 243 Fall 2007 Sections R11 and R12; ELST 243 Spring 2008 Section R13; ELST 243 Summer 2008 R14. Each box contained:

i. Binders of students' original class and homework which they had passed on to me

ii. Photocopies of student work that I had collected during the semester

iii. Chart paper and presentation materials from classwork

iv. Transcriptions of audio-taped class work and oral journals

v. Interview transcriptions

vi. Consent forms

vii. My own binder which contained everything I had used for the class – class lists, attendance sheets, students' e-mail addresses, student information sheets, teaching materials, lesson plans, exams, mid-term report cards, final exams, and final grades.

I stored the administrative documents and minutes from my various committees in separate containers, and labeled them: SSCC; CMC; ESL for university credits initiative; Department meetings; Chennai project.

I similarly organized separate files on my computer according to class and semester. Each electronic class file contained:

- in-class audio-files, consisting of:

    - in-class discussions

    - students' oral journals

    - private interviews

- Word-for-word transcriptions of each audio-file (Exception: I only transcribed in full the first oral journal in the Fall 2007 semester),

- Course outline and presentation

- Teaching materials that I created in a separate file according to class and semester

- A separate e-file for each committee which contained minutes of meetings, presentations, mission statements and e-mail correspondence

I stored multiple copies of the audio and textual data on my computer. I hand-wrote in my diary, a hard-covered journal which I kept with me almost all the time. During the entire data collection period, I taught five different classes although I focused closely on three classes and somewhat on the fourth. I made extensive notes on how these classes differed or were similar, my responses to each, and how I had to adapt both my teaching and materials to each specific class.

I reflected back and forth between these personal observations, the initial broad themes I had identified, my research questions and interview questions. The information I got from my (former) students during interviews provided me with insights into what I was doing in the class I was currently teaching and how I was developing – confirming, adapting, discarding – my ideas and themes. This in turn fed into the student interviews the

following semester. In this way the data analysis was ongoing and recursive over the entire year.

Initially I had intended to use a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program since qualitative research generates a lot of data. However, I opted instead for coding and organizing in the traditional way: identifying and developing appropriate categories according to emerging themes on my computer, copying discrete chunks of data from the original file and pasting them into the appropriate category. The analysis was recursive, beginning in the early stages of data collection, and continuing right through the writing process, as I clarified, limited and refined the emerging themes.

The two broad themes that I had anticipated emerging from the investigation were resistance and accommodation to critical language pedagogy. Resistance can manifest itself in a variety of oppositional behaviours:

- poor attendance, dropping out of class, not doing homework, tardiness

- passivity, inaudible responses, sleeping in class,

- disruptive behaviour, chatting, unwillingness to speak the target language

(Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2004).

However, according to Giroux (1983) oppositional behaviours need to be carefully scrutinized in order to determine the underlying motivations since not all such behaviour can be considered resistance. He distinguishes between "resistance" which contains a political imperative, and "opposition," which consists of a learned helplessness. Giroux sees ethnographic methods, especially in-depth interviews, as a way to explore the emic perspectives around these behaviours. Talmy (2005) disagrees, however, arguing that this resistance/opposition binary is oversimplified.

The second broad theme was accommodation to critical language pedagogy. Students who fit into this category may be perceived as potential agents of change. They seek to learn about social inequalities and injustices and how these circumscribe their lives and future opportunities. They actively try to apply strategies discussed in class to improve their lives and work for a more compassionate society. Expressions of this are likely to be seen in:

- Participating in classroom activities

- Engaging in anti-hegemonic activism in and outside the classroom, such as challenging unfairness

- Expressing enthusiasm and interest in written and oral reflective journals, assignments and private interviews

- Continuing discussions outside of class, and

- Connecting their work in the classroom with their lives outside the classroom and understanding the importance of this.

However, like resistant behaviour, observations of accommodating behaviour need to be carefully examined through interviews and analyses of students' reflective journals in order to uncover underlying motives. For example, far from indicating support of a CLP agenda, students who exhibit "accommodating" behaviours, may simply want to please their teacher or pass the course. Thus "accommodating" behaviours also need to be scrutinized, since rigid binaries resistance/accommodation or good resistance/bad resistance – are still problematic given that they essentialize and contain behaviours that are always dynamic and fluid, and context-dependent.

It became very clear to me that both the "resistant" and "accommodating" behaviours of my students needed to be carefully examined, not only in relation to each other but also in relation to me as their teacher. In her study of a critical EAP program, Lee (2007) noted that some teachers tended to blame their students for resisting the critical pedagogy without examining how their own identities were implicated. She concluded that this "highlighted the vital necessity for a reanalysis of instructors' practices in the classroom" (p. 229). Consequently, I carefully reflected on my student interview transcripts; contrasting and comparing them with textual data and my journal in order to present a more nuanced interpretation of my students' behaviours (See Chapter 4.2).

In addition to these broad themes, other sub- categories emerged:

1. Personal conceptualizations of critical pedagogy: Critical language education draws on students' own backgrounds and personal experiences.

   - What are students' understandings of social justice? Are they different from the teacher's?

   - How do the teacher and students respect and embrace cultural differences and universal principles?

   - How do they negotiate differences in opinions?

2. Issues around teacher authority/student agency:

   - How do students develop a critical consciousness? Do they?

   - Who influences their opinions – teacher, family, community, peers, and media?

   - Do their opinions shift during the semester?

   - Are they willing/able to challenge the opinions of others? Of the teacher?

   - How is agency revealed both inside and outside the classroom?

In addition to these themes, other sub-categories that emerged were related to the practicalities of implementing a critical language pedagogy:

1. Language acquisition issues:

    - How do students acquire effective language skills and a critical consciousness? Is this possible?

    - In a second language classroom, even at the advanced level, do they have sufficient language proficiency to adequately explore the theoretical complexity required by critical pedagogy and express these ideas adequately?

    - Has this course helped them to achieve their language goals/ academic success?

2. Time management issues:

    - Is there enough time in the course to negotiate the curriculum?

3.5 Ways of addressing the challenges in critical ethnography

In the following sections, I discuss how I addressed some of the challenges of a critical ethnographic approach in my research.

3.5.1 Representation and interpretation

Critical ethnography has been influenced by the postmodern position on knowledge as partial, contextualized and subjective. It also acknowledges the unequal power relations in society which are reflected in institutions such as schools and classrooms. Consequently issues of voice, representation, and subjectivity need to be carefully explored in order to determine whose voice is being heard, how the researcher and researched are represented in the data, and in the interpretation of the data, how the data is made public and for what purposes (Canagarajah, 1996, 2005; Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Duff, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Olesen, 2000; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Toohey, 1995).

Gailey (2000) holds that a major criticism of participant observation is the tendency of "othering," that is "rendering the subjects of research into objects, voyeurism by the powerful" (p. 214). She and other scholars recommend the researcher problematizes representations that pathologize and psychologize the Other (Behar, 2003; Fine et al., 2000). Fine explains that it is a difficult balancing act for theorists to "respect the integrity of informants' consciousness and narratives, place them within a socio-historical context, and yet not collude" (p. 120) in the pathologization of the Other which social science has for so long been guilty of. This resonated in my research in which there was a significant power disparity between the teacher/researcher and second language minority students, who may be marginalized by their lack of the dominant language, and immigrant or international student status. Some may also be further disadvantaged or stereotyped because of their race, culture, ethnicity, gender and class. There were times when my students expressed overtly homophobic and patriarchal remarks. By reporting these incidents, was I contributing to re-stereotyping certain cultural groups? On the other hand, critical pedagogy engages students and teacher in challenging such oppressive attitudes and behaviours. Negotiating between these two positions required constant reflexivity and sensitivity.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that reporting critical research should be also be problematized since it is layered with values and meanings mediated by the research process itself and the researcher, who typically has the final "say" in how the report is written. It is not just a matter of "writing up" the report, but the reflexive ethnographer needs to be aware of the many versions that can be constructed since "there is no single best way to reconstruct and represent the social world" (p. 240). This is true in my study in

which I am representing and interpreting my own students and my own practice. My

closeness to the subjects (myself and my students) could afford me greater and more

intimate insights and understandings, but it also has the potential to also shield, defend, and

deny.

In order to balance my authorial voice, I made use of in-depth and extended dialogues

between my students and myself which may better enable my former students to express

their own localized knowledges, thereby participating in knowledge construction in the

academy (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Olesen, 2000).

Moreover, Ellis and Bochner (2000) claim that the writer should engage the reader in

continued conversation in order to "offer lessons for further conversation rather than

undebatable conclusions" (p. 744). They maintain that readers should determine for

themselves "if [the work] speaks to them about their experiences" (p. 751). Kincheloe and

McLaren (2000) refer to this process as a "hermeneutical circle" since "no final solution is

sought in this context, as the activity of the circle proceeds with no need for closure" (p.

286).

However, this does not imply hard and fast prescriptions to the problems of authority,

representation and subjectivity, which have no neat and tidy resolutions, since it is neither

possible nor desirable to fully eliminate the authoritative status of the researcher. Rather,

the very slipperiness of critical ethnography reflects the "messiness" and complexity of

language education research. Instead, critical ethnographic research invites us to live with,

accept and even celebrate uncertainty, subtle nuances and open-endedness.

3.5.2 Ways of ensuring rigor

Because critical ethnographic research has been criticized for its lack of rigor, scholars have advocated adopting measures from conventional ethnography that ensure rigor and care such as triangulation, that is the use of multiple methods (Davis, 1995; Duff, 2008; Edge & Richards, 1998; Harklau, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain: "The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any perspective" (p. 5).

In my study, I aimed for greater trustworthiness and credibility through triangulation that included data from different sources and different methods, which enabled me to look at the research from different perspectives.

Different sources included:

- Copies of students' class and homework assignments, individual presentations and written and/or oral reflective journals

- Teacher notes, handouts, teacher-generated materials, course presentation, a self-reflexive journal

- Official documents such as course outline, textbooks, minutes of committee and department meetings

- Transcripts from taped private interviews, in-class discussions, annotations and written reflections of interviews

Different methods included:

- Classroom observations:

  - my observations of my own class (as a part of normal teaching practice)

- Textual analysis of written work, documents and transcribed in-class discussions and activities

- In-depth private interviews

In addition, triangulation allows space for the emergence of contradictions and exceptions which are equally important in ethnographic research and need to be gathered, included in the findings and analyzed. The fact that ethnographic research does not require neat and tidy conclusions makes it especially suitable for understanding the heterogeneity, instability and diversity of the modern world, especially of the English language classroom. Questions, contradictions and tensions can be left open for readers' and informants' own interpretations (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Davis, 1995; Duff, 2008; Edge & Richards, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Fine et al., 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Page, Samson, & Crockett, 1998).

Lather (1991) states that critical ethnographers strive for rigor and care through the notions of reflexivity and "catalytic validity" or "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (p. 68). In my study, I strove for reflexivity through a detailed and consisted journaling while an explicit purpose of my research was to promote social change.

I captured the complexity of the research situation, which should provide accountability rather than generalizability, by using "thick" description (Duff, 2008; Geertz, 1973; Holliday, 2004; Lazaraton, 1995; Pennycook, 1994; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; van Lier, 2005).

 "Thick" description was generated from:

- 224 hours of classroom observation (my own)

- analysis of class and homework assignments of 49 students collected over three semesters

- transcriptions from oral class work of 49 students audio-taped over three semesters

- analysis of a variety of official documents and teacher-generated materials

- transcriptions of private interviews with 28 participants – each interview was approximately 1- hour in length

- a reflexive journal

Moreover, Ellis and Bochner (2000) contend that generalizability can be somewhat achieved by the readers who decide if the narrative speaks to them about their experiences.

3.5.3 Emic/etic dilemma

In ethnographic research, striking the right balance between emic/etic or insider/outsider is a difficult task. According to some scholars, having a close, insider position could distort or bias interpretations or even open up the possibility of exploitation and exposure to risk. On the other hand, scholars also suggest that remaining detached could limit understanding (Duff, 2008; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Hornberger, 1994). This has implications for my study since I have worked at NWU for nine years, collaborated with colleagues in designing the ELST 243 course and taught it approximately six times, so I was very familiar with the context. Moreover, since I drew my participants from my former students, I had built up close relationships with them during the previous semester. But for the purposes of my own research, establishing trust and rapport with the participants was essential in engaging in critical, and often sensitive and controversial, pedagogy.

On the other hand, this close relationship could unduly influence the responses of the participants. They might interpret my remarks "as the 'correct' understanding of the topic" (Crookes & Lehner, 1998, p. 325), "seek to please me, or to meet perceived expectations " (Royal, 2006, p. 5). However, Olesen (2000) believes that "the image of the powerless respondent has altered with the recognition that researchers' 'power' is often only partial" (p. 234). Benesch (2001) has also noted that students do not necessarily passively absorb the political agendas of critical teachers.

While I acknowledge a substantial emic position, I also embody a distant or etic stance which separates me from my student participants. This is derived from my identification as a white, middle-class native English speaker and teacher, with the power and privileges that such a description implies. However, this in turn problematizes the power relations between the researcher/researched: giving up too much power may limit analysis of findings, but maintaining too much power may inhibit the researched (Hornberger, 1994a; Olesen, 2000).

In order to negotiate these tensions, I strove for transparency of information about the researcher/ researched relationship (Duff, 2008). I opted for extensive audio-taping which incorporated dialogues among my participants in class as well as between my students and myself in the classroom and in private interviews. I also kept a reflective journal, which I included as data, in which I interrogated and problematized my research and practice, my emic and etic positions. However, I agree with Reinharz (1992), who sees the emic/etic dilemma as not easily resolvable since there are advantages and disadvantages in both.

Brandes and Kelly's (2001) preferred role for teachers mirrors my own: "inclusive and situated engagement." They explain that "inclusive" signals a concern to attend to the

perspectives of excluded minorities, in my situation, my ESL students. "Situated" signals that all teachers (or knowers) are located within a particular landscape of identities, values, and social situations from which they view the world, that is, my own subjectivities as outlined previously. Finally, "engagement" signals the need to make my viewpoint open to critique by my students as well as to model reasoned inquiry and action (p. 245).

3.5.4 Ethics

Protecting the anonymity of the participants can be problematic. This is especially true in critical research which explicitly challenges hegemonic behaviours. Thus the researcher needs to be cautious that s/he does not embarrass, slander or violate the trust between the researcher and researched (Duff, 2008). Olesen (2000) worries that lack of information – either from protecting informants' identities or from the complexities of daily life – may influence the mutual construction of data by researcher and researched. However, she agrees that these issues are characteristic of qualitative work, "which can never resolve all ethical dilemmas that arise" (p. 234).

This was a great concern of mine since many of my participants, who come from countries where dissent and criticism are often rigidly suppressed, were very open and outspoken. In encouraging such openness, I felt a great responsibility to safeguard their identities. I hope that by giving them pseudonyms, and removing identifying details, I have protected them sufficiently without distorting the data in any way. Since the ethnicity of my students could identify them, I opted for English pseudonyms for all, even though this diminishes the multicultural authenticity of the participants and their stories to some extent.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the main principles of a critical ethnographic case study and the reasons why I believe this research method was the most suitable for my study. I also provided a detailed account of my course, and the students I taught from September 2007 to August 2008 who became the participants in my study. I described the data collection procedures and outlined what would guide the analysis of my findings. I ended the chapter by describing some of the challenges in ethnographic research and how I dealt with them in my own study – issues of representation and interpretation; ways of ensuring rigor; the emic/etic dilemma; and how to present my participants' subjectivities while simultaneously protecting their identities.

One of the major criticisms in ethnography is the lack of objectivity of the researcher which could influence and even distort the findings and analysis. Scholars maintain this remains a problem in *all* research since none can escape the subjectivities of the researcher. Rather than deny or ignore this, critical ethnography encourages the researcher to expose his/her own perspectives and positionalities. Consequently, in this chapter, I also discussed my multiple identities which situated me both as an insider and outsider with regards to my research participants. These positionalities came with both advantages and disadvantages, thus contributing to a more complex and nuanced account.

I acknowledge that my epistemology is deeply shaped by the critical theories postulated by the discipline in which I was a post-graduate student. It is only in conversation with my children, post-graduate students in different fields, that I came to realize that this was but one way of understanding the world. My own personal history has also profoundly influenced my views. As a white anti-apartheid South African, I support an

anti-racist agenda, but also recognize the need to embrace a more complex and nuanced

discourse that articulates with other forms of oppression as well as resistance. As an

immigrant, I acknowledge the inability to become deeply attached to the adopted country.

As a teacher of minority immigrant students, I foreground their needs and advocate for

greater opportunities and equality for them. As a person who has lived and traveled in

many multicultural and multilingual countries, diversity is a part of my "habitus". In all, I

admit partiality – both incompleteness and subjectivity – yet still strive to "make a

difference" in building a more inclusive and equitable Canadian society, content with small

steps of reform while anticipating the possibility of more radicalized and emancipated

future.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I present my language pedagogy over three semesters through

detailed accounts of my classroom activities. I look at what aspects of this pedagogy meet

the criteria of critical language education. Through interviews with students, examination

of their class and homework, and in-class audio-taped interactions, I gauge their response to

this pedagogy. Finally, I try to determine whether this pedagogy does indeed offer

possibilities of new, more complex and empowered identities.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: DROPOUTS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND WESTERN DEMOCRACY

In this chapter, I invite you into my classroom. Space does not permit me to share our dialogical interactions and private interviews in full, but I hope the following snapshot provides the reader with a picture of my students and me as we grappled to make sense of a critically-oriented classroom. I would like the reader to see my students as I did – warm and vibrant, engaged and enthusiastic, often humorous, sometimes frustrated and anxious, struggling to convey their ideas, often through fractured English.

Of course, there will be voices missing from this classroom – those who dropped out, the quiet, the shy – but silence need not necessarily be interpreted as passivity or disinterest for students have many ways of engagement. As one student explained, "I listen and watch," a strategy that Western pedagogy undervalues in its frantic endorsement of "active participation."

And since the teacher cannot be uncoupled from the students in a dialogical critical classroom, I invite the reader also to observe and interpret my actions and how they impact a critical classroom. I do not pretend to have done everything "right" - my diary reminds me of my constant self-doubt, my vulnerability and struggles – but I hope that the reader can add his or her own reflective interpretation to my detailed description and analysis. In this way we – my students, the reader and I – can continue to build knowledge about critical language pedagogy as an ongoing and dynamic process.

Finally, I hope the reader will fill the spaces between the dialogues and language activities with the affective behaviours that bring life to a classroom – the cheerful greetings at the beginning of the class, the tears over poor grades, even the occasional nosebleeds, a

reflection of the stresses and pressures of second language learning, the gentle teasing and friendly joking – and the great affection and respect I have for my students in all their powerful, intelligent, colourful and multifaceted representations.

I begin with a discussion of how I struggled to co-construct the curriculum, one of the central tenets in critical pedagogy. I then deal with, perhaps one of the most difficult subjects for a teacher, the students who dropped out. Thirdly, I try to establish whether a critical pedagogy, with its explicit social justice agenda, is even possible in a multicultural class, since immigrants and internationals bring with them such a variety of culturally-specific epistemological perspectives. Finally, I argue that if we are to introduce a social justice agenda, we need also to problematize Western democracy. Thus in Section 3, I discuss Canada's racist past and its implications.

4.1 Negotiating the curriculum: "You make our brains turn and turn."

In this section, I address the problems I encountered in trying to negotiate a meaningful curriculum with my students. I then outline some of the main features of the curriculum my students and I eventually engaged with. Finally, I describe my students' responses to this curriculum.

4.1.1 Problematizing co-construction

Much has been written about the need to co-construct the curriculum with students rather than imposing one which often has little relevance to their lives (Auerbach, 1993a, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Freire, 2007; Giroux, 1983). According to Auerbach (1995), "[students] address social problems by sharing and comparing experiences, analyzing root causes, and exploring strategies for change. Knowledge, rather than being transmitted from

teacher to students, is collaboratively constructed, involving the transformation of traditional student-teacher roles" (p. 12)

However, not much has been written about how to *do* this. Auerbach (1993b) describes how a group of immigrant women researched issues of unemployment which other women could use to help them overcome barriers in the job market. Benesch (2001) helped her students negotiate fairer conditions in their university-credit course. Truscello (2004) helped his students develop social capital networks that would enhance their future life chances. However, all these examples imply a significant degree of homogeneity in students' present conditions and future aspirations. In contrast, my classes were extremely heterogeneous, with a range of ages, academic goals, and life objectives. What if nothing "critical" evolved out of our class? Once again my diary reflects my anxiety around this:

> *I feel as if I'm trying to force a critical agenda in the interests of my research, rather than in my students' interests – it seems a bit contrived. It should evolve naturally – but what if nothing does?*
> (Diary 10/09/07)

One of the major obstacles was the lack of class time. With only four hours per week over 14 weeks, and an official curriculum to cover in order to prepare students for their final exams, it is difficult to justify spending the first few classes discussing what to include in the curriculum. This is further complicated by the fact that our ESL classes are usually not settled and stable until the second week. Students register late, drop out, or change classes due to schedule conflicts or misplacements.

Another major concern for me was the fact that the vast majority of students come from extremely structured education systems. There is a high expectation that the curriculum is already set by the instructor and there would be a lot of anxiety and confusion

for some if they themselves were expected to be involved in this process. Moreover, it would undermine their perception of my competence and organizational skills.

Two young male students expressed something of this to me. Sam (21) was anxious about his future studies, but said he found it difficult to make choices because "in my country you don't have to think what will happen next. Your teacher gives you all the information you need" (Diary extract: 29/09/08). Another student explained:

> [10]*…some of our classmates and students -- [11] they prefer to learn more kind of like, like the classical, original way. Sitting there, making notes -- teachers kind of teach…. We kind of need some more of that -- especially for Chinese people -- it's kind of like too sudden…. We just came here, let's say a year. We're not still -- we haven't -- we're still not aqua -- or used to the system, like Western system -- educational system in Canada. So it's kind of like, still we are between, or even not yet at the transition…the whole system change. You kind of feel, like, aimless…*
> (Michael (19): Interview: 13/03/08)

I struggled to find ways whereby students could have input into curriculum without spending (wasting) hours in what might appear to them to be a confusing and aimless process. I wanted to tap into both the macro-structure themes – human rights, environmental problems, crime and punishment, women's rights – as well as the concerns and needs in their everyday lives. I attached a list of topics to their Student Information Sheet (See Appendix F: Student Information Sheet). This provided a very broad overview of students' interests, but since the range of choices varied so much, it didn't give me much guidance. It does, nonetheless, highlight some of the difficulties around co-constructing a curriculum.

Another activity I thought might be helpful was to have students discuss the five most serious problems facing the world and then the five most serious concerns in their own lives

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[10] … ellipsis is used to show that some words have been omitted
[11] -- hyphens are used to indicate pauses, attempts to restate or clarify

(See Appendix N: Discussion: Problems in the World/Your life). I was becoming increasingly anxious that we might be focusing on the "Big Issues" at the expense of the everyday, and hoped this activity might alleviate that tendency. It was extremely successful, as if students were just waiting for an opportunity to share their own personal challenges. Although I had originally set up the activity so that students could give feedback to the whole class, one student asked if the discussions could remain private. She seemed relieved when I agreed, so the feedback to the whole class became very informal and open to whoever wanted to share their stories. Since this activity was on the second day of class, it was an effective bonding experience, with students realizing others shared similar, or even more challenging problems.

For example, one young male student expressed how much he suffered from homesickness and missed his country and friends. An older female student said she had had to leave her four-year-old son behind in the care of her in-laws. Other problems that students expressed included:

- the lack of opportunities to speak English in this particular city

- time management problems

- pressure from parents

Some students spontaneously offered advice and suggestions after hearing some of their classmates' concerns. Some were practical tips such as where to catch buses. Others suggested getting a part-time job in order to practice their English. These stories provided me with a way to connect their everyday struggles to our curriculum. At the same time, I was able to integrate into this activity some of the practical skills required by the official curriculum, (See Appendix A: Course Outline) and provide the students with an opportunity

for a lively discussion. Since the lack of English-speaking opportunities was one of their

major concerns, I determined to maximize their interactions with English-speakers as much

as possible during the semester by:

- having guest speakers in the classroom

- setting contact assignments involving interviews and surveys with English speakers

- having students keep a log of their interactions with English-speakers

- having my students run the Chennai Project Fundraiser which involved manning the

  table in the university rotunda, explaining the project to both faculty and students (ESL

  and non-ESL), selling samosas and raffle tickets.

   I tried to address the concerns over time management, by having a student group,

(their choice) attend a seminar on Time Management presented by the Counselling

Department. This was included as part of their mid-term group presentation assignment.

They had to survey five regular students on their time management strategies, and then

present their own workshop to the class based on information from the seminar and surveys.

4.1.2 A description of the curriculum

   In the end, I decided that a true co-construction was impractical, and undesirable for

the reasons given. So I decided to construct the curriculum with enough framework and

structure to give students a reasonable sense of security while still allowing for flexibility

and change depending on what arose at the time. For example, I relinquished my lesson

plans in the first week in favour of discussions around two articles – one on Social Justice

and the other on the Asian Race Riots – which appeared in the local newspaper that week

and seemed appropriate for a critical class. I also provided my students with the test

schedule at the beginning of the semester and mid-term reports that showed their progress

and indicated areas that needed improving. This spoke to Moorthy's (2006)

recommendations that CLP works best with some structure and framework.

I chose themes and activities that I thought were relevant, useful and empowering for

students based on my previous years of teaching as well as theoretical knowledge I had

gained from conferences, journal readings, and my post-graduate studies. In addition, I

included the input from the previously described activities. The final curriculum revolved

around a number of dialogical problem-posing activities and role plays closely-related to the

students' lives, and covered the following themes:

- **Academic life:** Cheating; asking the teacher to postpone a test; questioning a final
  grade; the English Only Policy; bullying.

- **Everyday life:** Being involved in a car accident; experiences of discrimination;
  addressing the needs of the homeless; ways to reduce the number of cars on the road.

- **Cultural life:** Arranged and intercultural marriages; religious customs; changes in the
  traditional Canadian family; discussions on rights, obligations and values.

- **Social issues**: Capital punishment; euthanasia; AIDS; bias in the media; gay rights.

Too often the ESL teacher becomes essentialized by her/his students as the "Canadian

voice." In order to expose my students to a variety of perspectives, I invited guest speakers

into the classroom and set contact assignments that involved interviewing and surveying the

public. I emphasized that English-speakers come from many different ethnic backgrounds

and encouraged them to interview people from a variety of ethnicities.

At the same time, I realized it was unrealistic to ignore the powerful role of the

teacher as the representative of Canadian culture, so rather than deny it, I decided it was

better to acknowledge it and use it in a meaningful way. I exposed students to the positive

aspects of Canadian society, such as those embodied in the Charter of Rights, recognizing that many gains have been made in North American society (Apple, 1999); at the same time, I problematized the untarnished image of Canadian democracy, by also exposing the negative aspects, such as systemic racism and the legacy of Western colonialism (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Moodley, 1995; Parekh, 2006; Sleeter, 1995; Willinsky, 1998).

Consequently, I had students read and discuss two news articles on racism in Canada. In addition, I introduced and discussed Canada's historical and systemic racism through a video "*Where the Spirit Lives"* (Pittman, 1989) which discusses Canada's residential schools. In the summer 2008 semester, I had students interview Canadians on their views of the Government's apology to First Nations (See Chapter 4.4.1).

I also provided students with some opportunities to choose their own topics in their news reports and final oral presentations. Among the news articles that students chose to discuss:

- Sikh Men banned from construction site for not wearing hardhats

- Safety seminars for ESL students

- Couple accuses restaurant owner of racism

Presentations included:

- Violence against Women in the Indo-Canadian community

- Canada's role in Afghanistan

- The Changing Role of Women in China

- The Challenges Facing Women's Equality in China

- The Advantages and Disadvantages of China's One-Child Policy

I agree with the many theorists who insist that practical skills should not be neglected in a critical pedagogy (Apple, 1999; Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Giroux, 1983; Lee, 2007). Consequently, I integrated the listening and speaking skills, as outlined in the official curriculum, into all my themes and activities. For example, my students practised note-taking and listening comprehension skills when a guest speaker from the Youth PrideSpeak came to talk to the class. Afterwards, they were given time to discuss their notes in groups, expand and/or clarify them. I then collected their notes and returned them some weeks later, at which point I gave them a comprehension test (See Appendix O: Comprehension Test: Guest Speaker). In all their dialogues, discussions, forums and role plays, students practised the functional language of interrupting politely, agreeing, disagreeing, asking for clarification and expressing an opinion.

I also integrated academic study skills into the curriculum by having students in groups attend workshops put on by the Learning Centre and Counselling Department (See Appendix P: Group Presentations: Workshop Schedule). Each group had to re-present one of these workshops to the class. In this way, I tried to balance the more critically-oriented themes and methodologies with the formal and traditional curriculum which would provide my students with the necessary cultural capital essential for academic success and social access (Apple, 1999; Giroux, 1983; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999).

The students worked a lot of the time in small groups, solving problems, discussing issues, preparing for informal cooperative debates, role plays or discussion forums. At those times, I acted as facilitator, answering questions, adding to the conversation, correcting errors, clarifying. Sometimes I acted in a more traditional teacher-fronted role, such as when reviewing tests, or explaining how to prepare an outline for an oral

presentation. Students also worked individually on contact assignments, preparing

questions for surveys and interviews; in addition, they worked individually in the language

lab., listening to lectures from their textbook and to authentic talks on a variety of current

social issues.

Although I followed a fairly structured framework, I was always ready and willing to

abandon a pre-planned lesson if something important came up unexpectedly. An example

of this occurred in the last weeks of the Spring 2008 semester while my students were doing

a routine warm-up activity to prepare for the final oral exam. I gave each student a topic

that they had to talk about on the spot for one minute:

> Wendy: *If you could change one thing about Canada, what would you change?*
> Ken: *I would change the way they report the news. I saw some news from the Canadian news, I think something was not true because they say the Tibetans were peacefully march but it's not true…*
> (Ken (22): class activity: 04/08)

The Tibet situation, and the protests and media focus on human rights in China had

become the "hot" issue of the day in the build-up to the Beijing Olympics. Since Ken's one

minute talk stirred up a lot of reaction in the class, both from the Chinese and other

students, I abandoned my planned lesson and we continued dialoguing for the next hour

(See Chapter 5.1.4).

 Another student commented on this in our interview:

> *But I notice that you don't really mind to let us talking. When we were -- we was talking about something, you always push us to -- to continue. You keep going, you ask a question about it. So it's just -- you jump from one topic to another. That's good because you kept the attention of the student. Like sometime we were talking about Chinese stuff -- like what's happened before. I find I like it. They are all Chinese so of course they will keep going. In fact we were, I think Tibet -- we were talking about Tibet.*
> (Simon (24): interview: 19/06/08)

While maintaining faith with the core concepts of CLP, I also adapted some aspects of it to fit my own context. In doing so, I tried to meet the needs of those students who require more structure and I recognized and validated my own experience and knowledge.

4.1.3 Students' responses to the curriculum

However, since this study emphasizes *students'* conceptions and experiences of my class, I turn to their responses to my approach as outlined above. From their private interviews most of the students said what they valued most about the class was having the opportunity to:

- discuss things from "the real life"

- learn more about Canadian culture and expectations

- talk about personal things that were meaningful in their own lives

- learn more about their rights and how to stand up for those rights.

- discuss issues that were not talked about in their own countries

One student expressed it thus:

> *I really like this topic, and I think that we should talk about it. This is the use on life. You learn English -- and the other is to learn confidence in society and how to treat other people…we like this kind of topic because we think about it and we like to talk about it…before I have some topic, if it is boring, we don't know how to talk. But the [Falun Gong, discrimination, bullying etc.] we know. Real things we can talk about it. We can use this for the real life. I loved that! Maybe next time you give us more? Oh, <u>so useful!</u>*
> <div align="center">(Susan (36): Interview: 30/01/08)</div>

Another student explained:
> *…we not only listen to the materials we get…I search the internet and all these things can especially help us to understand Canadian cultures…maybe we will face these kind of situations. It helps us to say what we want to say and give us some ideas to make up -- the information [so] we can speak out. I remember so clearly the first oral journal I told you about the story of my Grandma. I can express my own feeling or my own experience so I can tell my story. I took another class…. I almost afraid to speak something out of the topic -- I must speak about our book -- something that is not connected to the real life. It a little*

bit bored, and -- yes, boring and difficult to understand. When I got [your] homework, I thought, 'I have to talk to Canadians and native speakers' and I also afraid of it, but after I began everything is fine. It make me more confident to speak to native speakers. And also it's one way to understand what people think. [I spoke to] my landlord, and my son's teacher, and manager in our building, and also the tutors.
<div align="center">(Angela (36): Interview: 03/06/08)</div>

Another student, Pam, said she also found the topics and activities interesting because she had never heard about these situations in China. However, she went on to say that her co-workers at her part-time job were young Canadians who talked mostly about pop culture. She was watching some of the same TV shows and reading the same books as them in order to fit in and be able to talk about common things. Pam's comments reminded me that failing to provide opportunities to work with the basic interpersonal things of daily life, can be just as limiting and disempowering for students. One of Lee's (2007) teacher participants discovered this when she went to breakfast with her students and "they have debates about gay marriage, for example, but they can't order breakfast" (p. 196).

Another student had this to say:

I think what you did is very useful. I think sometimes it's difficult for you because you only have two classes one week and you have to improve our speaking skills and listening skills and how to take notes and basic skills…and you also want to introduce some new information from the newspaper so it's difficult for you but it's useful for us. It's very useful! If you learn only how to take notes, do you think it's useful to talk with normal people? Maybe social values is more important. When you go to a company, when other colleagues talk about something and you don't understand, you don't know, you will feel very embarrassed…. And you seldom make a lecture; you just give us a lot of time to discuss. Very good. (passionately) Yes, very good!…I remember you give us a question. It will make our brain turn and turn.
<div align="center">(Kerry (37): Interview: 24/01/08)</div>

While these comments indicate that the students seemed to appreciate a dialogical, interactive class in which they could engage with meaningful, socially and personally

relevant material, the voices of those who dropped out are not heard. I discuss this in the following section.

4.2 Oppositional behaviour: The afternoon effect

When I first began my research, I anticipated two broad themes emerging, resistance and accommodation to a critical language pedagogy. Many theorists have explained that resistance can manifest itself in a variety of oppositional or subversive behaviours such as poor attendance and not doing homework to dropping out (Auerbach, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2004; Lee, 2007; Lin, 2004; Norton, 2000; Talmy, 2005; Willett & Jeannot, 1993). They conclude that this behavior is one way students are able to express their dissatisfaction with a language program's curriculum and pedagogy. They encourage teachers to critically reflect on how their practices may be implicated in such behaviours.

In the first semester of my research, (Fall 2007), I became very alarmed when my R12 class became problematic, with five students displaying classic oppositional behaviour. Their attendance was irregular, they arrived late, without an excuse or an apology, and dialogue, if it happened at all, was ponderous. Since a lot of the work was collaborative, when students arrived without having prepared, the whole class was disrupted. Although I began the semester by doing very similar activities in both classes, everything was going smoothly in R11[12] while nothing seemed to work in R12. The following extract from my diary provides a glimpse of the differences between the two classes and my resulting anxiety: "Class still problematic. I always leave the class totally drained and exasperated

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[12] Of course, some scholars would argue that such exemplary behaviour may also indicate a type of resistance – compliance with the course and teacher's expectations in order to pass. However, I would disagree since this would be an underestimation of my students' sense of Self, their agency, and the complex ways they grappled with the course content and interacted with me. I hope the following sections in this chapter and the next will effectively illustrate this.

whereas R11 energizes and excites me….How can two classes be so different?!" (Diary: 09/10/07)

I began seriously questioning my practice, wondering how to salvage the mess. Putting myself under the research lens, made it even more traumatic for me – how was I going to write about being a "failed" critical pedagogue?

Drawing on my theoretical knowledge, I asked myself:

- Was I too attached to current Western learning style – process-oriented, task-based, inductive, collaborative, communicative – which does not suit all students? (Canagarajah, 2005)

- Was my material too conceptually difficult to deal with in such a short 2-hour class? (Moorthy, 2006)

- Was I not giving the students enough input into the curriculum choices, so it did not relate to their lives? (Auerbach, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Benesch, 2001; Lee, 2007)

- Was I, like Lin (2004), being too strict, rule-bound, insisting on punctuality and completed homework assignments?

- Was I not doing enough to counter what some scholars consider the "linguistic hegemony" of English, which results in students *having to* rather than *choosing* to learn English? (Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1995).

Each of my questions, brought forth a different attempt to connect with my students – asking them what they wanted to do, reverting to a more traditional teacher-fronted pragmatic role, talking privately to the "problem" students. I didn't want to invoke the Attendance Policy and Classroom Responsibilities, outlined in the Course Presentation given to students on the first day, (See Appendix B), as it seemed too heavy-handed and an

escape. I wanted instead to understand this oppositional behaviour, and reflect on if and how my teaching practice was contributing to it.

However, I also agreed with Gore (1998) that not all power is negative and "disciplinary technologies" (Foucault, 1977, 1980) can facilitate pedagogy as well as oppress. When classes are organized around student participation, absenteeism, lateness and failure to do homework will impact negatively on the rest of the class. I decided to address this by e-mailing my students to remind them of the Attendance Policy and Classroom Responsibilities, hoping that this would get things back on track; however, three weeks later there was little improvement.

Things came to a head when Beth walked into class 10 minutes late, with no apology or excuse, interrupting our class activity. I asked her to wait outside until we had finished.

Wendy: *Why are you taking this course?*
Beth: *I have to.*
Wendy: *Are you interested in it?*
Beth: *No.*
Wendy: *Why don't you withdraw?*
Beth: *(Silence and embarrassed giggles) I promise I'll do better and be on time from now on.*
Wendy: *What's going to change?*
Beth: *I think it was a bad idea to be in the same class as my boyfriend.*
Wendy: *But that should make it better for you! You can discuss the homework, and help each other.*
Beth: *(hearty laughter) He's even lazier than I am!*
(Diary: 11/10/07)

However, after the fifth student dropped out by the middle of the semester, the remaining eight gelled and the class became much more engaged, on task, and attentive. I tried to understand how this oppositional behavior had completely changed the classroom dynamics and in what way my teaching practice had possibly been implicated.

Benesch (2001) was able to transform oppositional behaviours in her own EAP class through intense dialogical interactions with her students. They were able to identify certain unfair academic procedures, devise a collective action plan, and approach their regular professor to renegotiate certain expectations. Since these were all satisfactorily addressed by the professor, students felt empowered within the academic administration and successfully passed the mainstream class.

Giroux (1983) sees ethnographic methods, especially in-depth interviews, as a way to explore the emic perspectives around oppositional and resistant behaviours. However, I soon discovered that students who drop out do not usually make themselves available for in-depth interviews, so it was impossible to truly understand their reasons from an emic perspective. Instead, I tried to elicit this information by asking their classmates in my private interviews. In my R11 class, much to my surprise and disappointment, two male students, who had performed reasonably well all semester, disappeared two weeks before the end of the term. A classmate explained, "I just heard that…they have already passed the TOEFL…so they don't have to study any ESL" (Doug (19): Interview: 12/03/08).

Two of the dropouts from R12 registered for my class the following semester. Cyril explained that he had dropped out the previous semester because his return ticket to China for the Christmas holidays was before the final exam and he was unable to change his ticket. (He had previously discussed with me the possibility of changing the final exam to accommodate him.) Donna had been plagued with health problems all semester and had returned to China for surgery. She continued to have health problems in the following semester and dropped out again.

Of the other three remaining students, a classmate had this to say:

> *...maybe they don't think much of their school. Maybe they think this class was boring and then they drop out. I'm not really sure.*
> (Sam (21): Interview: 05/02/08)

One of the most interesting exchanges came from Hilton, who told me he had dropped out of another school because he didn't like the teaching style which included too many rules and regulations. He also talked about other classes he had been in when some days half the students didn't show up or dropped out. This led to a discussion about my class.

Wendy: *You didn't drop my class, right?*
Hilton: *No, and I only missed your class one time and it's because I'm sick. It's unbelievable you know. Last semester I registered in ESL Level 2 and I took both classes and I dropped both the classes.*
Wendy: *Why?*
Hilton: *Because I missed class a lot!*
Wendy: *Why did you miss class a lot? Weren't you enjoying your class?*
Hilton: *Yes, I think so. In the same time, I took your class and another class – 244 – and then I missed (244) nine times.*
Wendy: *Nine times! So what was different about my class, you didn't miss?*
Hilton: *I think I can learn from you. Another class, maybe it's not good to say but I didn't learn from the teacher.*
Wendy: *So why do you think in my class, you didn't miss?*
Hilton: *I don't know. So I think it's unbelievable!*

We both laughed and I leant forward in anticipation – who amongst us doesn't enjoy a word of praise from our students! He continued, "Maybe your class is in the afternoon, maybe that's the reason" (Hilton (20): Interview: 12/02/08).

I sat back, deflated. All the effort I had put into trying to connect how my teaching was implicated in the "oppositional" behavior and I had overlooked what was beyond my control – the afternoon effect!

To summarize, out of the seven students who dropped my class in Fall 2007 semester, two did so after passing the TOEFL made it unnecessary for them to continue, one because

of bad health, one because of flight conflicts, two because they probably were not interested in the class, and the seventh student gave no inkling of her reason. Thus unlike Benesch's (2001) class in which discontent was seemingly pervasive and for the same reason, in my R12 class, only some students displayed these behaviours and, as I have illustrated, for a variety of reasons. So what are we to deduce from this oppositional behaviour? How can teachers counter such stances of apathy and indifference to ensure that they can create energized, and engaging learning environments for those students who really want to learn?

While it is essential for teachers to reflect on how their own teaching is implicated in such behaviours, it is also important to look at the many other variables that may contribute to opposition.

Firstly, scheduling obviously has an impact as Hilton succinctly pointed out, with afternoon classes more popular than early morning or early evening for young students [13].

Secondly, the students' ages could also have influenced class dynamics. As one student pointed out, it was difficult to discuss controversial socio-political issues with young people who had little life experience. That certainly seemed the case in R12 where the majority of students were in their early 20s and only two in their 40s. Although the age range was just as disparate in R11, between 19 and 40, it was more evenly balanced, with nine students over 25 and eight under 25. The young students interacted very well with the older students and with the sociopolitical issues while one of the mature students explained to me how much she enjoyed hearing the opinions of the younger generation.

Thirdly, parental pressure is an important factor which may drive students to oppositional behavior. Sam told me that his parents kept on asking him when he was going to begin his "studies," as if learning English was not considered "studying." It indicated

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[13] My "problem" class was in the early evening.

how the parents of ESL students often have unrealistic expectations of English language

learning. Moreover, many students told me they had no choice in the decision to study

English in Canada, particularly if there was the possibility of their not getting into a

university in their own country. Michelle told her group when they were discussing the five

most serious problems in their own lives that she "hated" her parents for making her come

to Canada.

Other students had this to say:

> *Actually, reasons of sad story…in [my country], my mark of the English is very low, poor…and I cannot get into University because of my English level. And my mother said if you really want to learn English, and improve your English speaking, why don't you go Canada?*
> (Doug (19): Interview 12/03/08)

> Wendy: *Why did you decide to come to Canada?*
> Ann: *You must ask my parents. (laughs)*
> Wendy: *Oh, they decided?*
> Ann: *Yes.*
> Wendy: *Did you want to come or you didn't have a choice?*
> Ann: *I didn't have a choice, I had to come.*
> (Ann (22): Interview 01/02/08)

> Colin: *Actually…I just finished the Provincial exam. And suddenly my mom said you are going to Canada to study this year. I said "Aaahh! What happened?!" She didn't tell me before.*
> Wendy: *She didn't ask you if you wanted to go? So why did she decide that?*
> Colin: *I didn't ask her but I guess. I am guessing that she saw my studies was not very good and I may not have a chance to go into pre-university level.*
> (Colin (19): Interview: 07/02/08)

While none of these students dropped out, these statements support the view that

English is seen by many of the students' parents as a necessity rather than an option, in

order to succeed. This lack of choice speaks to (among other things) the perpetuation of

linguicism and, as many scholars contend, it is important for ESL teachers to recognize their

complicity in the continuation of this hegemony (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005;

Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1995). However, it is also important to acknowledge that teachers' power to disrupt it is fairly limited (Covaleskie, 1993; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Pennycook, 2001). This is particularly true in the face of parental pressures and the larger issue of intense competition to access post-secondary institutions in their own countries.

A critical language pedagogy, like any other pedagogy, should not be regarded as the panacea for all classroom difficulties. It is also important to examine the many other variables, otherwise scholars and researchers appear to be unintentionally invoking a narrative of "blame." This is counterproductive since teachers are more likely to react in oppositional behaviour themselves by resenting the "experts," widening the schism between scholar and practitioner. Gore (1992) experienced this in her own Teacher Education program when her efforts to introduce a critical agenda had undesirable outcomes.

My findings indicate that not only is it difficult to distinguish between resistance and oppositional behaviour, any kind of oppositional behaviour is itself complex and nuanced and needs to be carefully unpacked.

In her in-depth and thorough study of a critical EAP program, one of the few of its kind, Lee (2007) describes how a group of students had presented a "manifesto" expressing their dissatisfaction with the program to the administration the previous semester. This incident was brought up in a later meeting in order to analyze "what had gone wrong" with the program pedagogy. Lee concludes that the problems the program was experiencing were at least in part due to a lack of coherent vision amongst the teachers over what a critical pedagogy should entail. Without an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings

of a critical pedagogy, she asserts that teachers usually fall back on teaching according to the ways they have been taught (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Pennycook, 2004).

However, surprisingly, Lee, the administrators and instructors gloss over the fact that such a manifesto represents a high level of resistance and critical consciousness, involving the students in organizing, collaborating, writing up and presenting their document to the administration. By ignoring the fact that this process reflected perhaps already empowered student identities, the students were unwittingly re-silenced.

This caused me to consider the impact of the *investment* in critical language pedagogy of the researcher, administrators and instructors, all of whom had a strong commitment to CLP. As a graduate student myself from a liberal Western with a similar stake in the efficacy of CLP as an alternative approach to teaching, I was alerted to the pitfalls of such a stance.

Firstly, we need to recognize and accept that our students may not be interested in a pedagogy that is rooted in neo-Marxism and social change; perhaps what they want instead is access to the power and privilege that they see English affording them. As Pennycook (1995) states, students learn English for many unanticipated reasons.

Secondly, in "empowering" our students, we cannot control what they are empowered to do, including rejecting some of the very values and principles that we may believe in. As Johnston (2003) says, "[o]n the one hand, we profess a respect for alternative cultural values and undertake not to impose our own values on others. On the other hand, we hold certain of our own cultural values so dear that we want them to guide our work" (p. 65). Thus the first critical question became for me, "Can my students and I develop a shared vision of a

socially just and egalitarian society?" It is to this question that I turn in the following section.

4.3 Teaching for social justice: Do students care?

While "teaching for social justice" remains a rather broad and nebulous concept, scholars have described it loosely as inclusive, egalitarian, and democratic (Brandes & Kelly, 2001; Mohan & Walker, 2008). Corson and LeMay (1996) prioritize equal treatment, respect for people and maximum benefit while Pennycook (2001) emphasizes that there are no fixed ethical codes, only difficult decisions about the ethical demands of language education. Was there a vast difference between these visions (also mine) and my students' conceptualizations? And if so, would this negate the possibility of a critical language pedagogy? Moreover, since none of my students was a refugee, but all were immigrants or international students, predominantly from China, they seemed to fit with Vandrick's (1995) description of "privileged" students.

Being able to afford a Western education would automatically put them in a higher income bracket than many of their compatriots. In addition, returning to their countries with a Western education and English proficiency would almost certainly guarantee them more status and salary. Was Vandrick correct in asking if there was any point in encouraging such students to use their education to transform society since they are generally satisfied with how the system works (in their favour)? Was she correct in saying that privileged students are not usually interested in discussing sociopolitical issues since they have no relevance to their lives?

I tried to find answers to these questions by triangulating data from three different sources:

1. Students read and responded to a newspaper article on social justice

2. In private interviews students shared their views on social justice

3. In small groups and with the whole class, we discussed rights, obligations and values

In the first week of the Fall 2007 semester, my students read and discussed a front page news story, entitled *B.C. High Schools Get 'ISMS' Course* (Steffenhagen, 2007), about a new course, Social Justice 12, that had just been offered to Grade 12 students at some high schools in B.C.[14] The article described the content of the course which deals with cultural imperialism, feminism, racism, sexism and homophobia. According to its developers, its explicit objective is to "describe injustice …analyze the causes and describe consequences….and take a stand against these injustices" (p. A2).

This article gave me a simple way to introduce concepts of social justice, discrimination, and human rights. It also included how these concepts can be controversial and open to different interpretations by various groups, such as the Catholic Church and the B.C. Parents and Teachers for Life. Students were asked to read and summarize the article for homework, retell and discuss the main points in small groups in class the following day. They were later asked to express their opinions of the Social Justice course, what their understanding of social justice was and what they considered to be the main features of a fair and equal society in their oral journals (See Appendix H: Oral Journal: Social Justice).

In order to compare their oral journal responses with their private interviews six months later, I asked students again what social justice meant to them, what a fair and equal

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[14] It was developed by Murray Corren and his spouse, Peter, to settle a human rights complaint they had lodged regarding the portrayal of sexual orientation in the public high schools.

society would look like and how they could improve society (See Appendix G: Interview Guidelines).

 One student rejected outright the notion of social justice:

We, we don't, we are indifferent now and also we are, we have a very good life in China so we don't feel social justice. I shouldn't say that, but only the people who had an unhappy life, they will feel social justice. But if you are happy with your life you will feel indifferent. We only want to see how the others live in Western countries…and we don't want to pursue the democracy, the social fairness, we don't want that.
<div align="center">(Kerry (37): Interview: 24/01/08)</div>

On the other hand, in their oral journals only one student disapproved of the Social Justice 12 course because "schools should teach subjects like math and history". All the other students viewed the course very positively:

I support Social Justice 12 because encourage tolerance is good for students. But on another hand, religious group is not totally wrong…. This course is lack of definition. But two sides must not fight. They need to sit down and talk about it and analyze right way to teach the students.
<div align="center">(Susan (36): oral journal: 09/08)</div>

It's not just teachers teach and students receive it. Students and teachers can discuss it and have different opinions. It will encourage social responsibility.
<div align="center">(Heather: oral journal: 09/08)</div>

 One student thought it was good to offer the course in high schools because:

They are young and can change their habits and learn how to know new rules.
<div align="center">(Brenda (19): oral journal: 09/08)</div>

In their journals, the students in general described their understanding of social justice, and the characteristics of a fair and equal society, in the following ways:

- same benefits, opportunities and rights for everyone, no matter rich or poor

- understand and accept differences of individuals

- encourage different religions to communicate, learn about and understand each other

- reduce the huge gap between the rich and poor in every society

- equality of women, no racial or sexual discrimination

- speak freely, 'medication' and education for all.

In private interviews students expanded on their vision of social justice, and how they would improve society if they could. The vast majority spoke of social justice as a society in which people were treated equally, with no racial, gender or sexual discrimination, and particularly no special privileges for the rich. Perhaps the most passionately articulated perspective was expressed by Jill:

Wrong is, you want to get benefit from people, from other person -- you don't care about to hurt people. Right is, I do anything just because I want to benefit the society...if people can think about the justice -- What is justice? Justice is the benefit for everybody. The fair -- the fairness -- for everybody! ...I don't like corruption. Why? Because corruption is only some people's benefit. Not the benefit of -- everybody -- of public!
                    (Jill (45): interview: 18/04/08)

One student took a more self-reflective stance:

I remember another article you give us, I remember very deeply, it's an article about a -- a topic for the high school, it's a very interesting topic -- because you know it's different for me to do this subject -- because you know maybe for the Western students it's natural to think something about [these kinds of topics]. After I read this article I think maybe I judge some things, I judge these things -- biased. You can think you judge some things without -- not -- without bias. You can think -- it's your instinct. So that's very important to review yourself -- because sometimes I will feel confident about something. But after I read this article I will have a second thought -- maybe I have a wrong decision. Maybe I have a bias.
                    (John (40): interview: 27/02/08)

Many students openly criticized the corruption in their own countries, the growing disparity between the rich and poor and the privileges that the rich were able to obtain. I deliberately tried to avoid a Eurocentric attitude, by avoiding any comparison between Canada and their countries; instead, I asked them to explain their vision of a "fair and equal" society. At the same time, however, as Apple (1999) points out, it is also important

to acknowledge that democratic and egalitarian rights are at least enshrined in Canadian

laws and Charter, facts that students recognized and often praised.

> *In my country the rich people they have more rights than the poor people. I think it is not fair. Because they have more money they can pay money to the officers and government officers. They can break the laws and they won't go to prison.*
> (Dawn (19): Interview: 04/02/08)

> *I think all people are equal [in Canada] and ah -- the society is a fair society. The law protects everyone and we are -- we don't have those much richer people, or much poor people. But in China the gap between the rich and the poor get very large. Even though China was Communist for so long and everybody was equal right, so there has been a change so quickly. Like there are so many rich people and so many poor people. Oh, the gap is really big.*
> (Barbara (20): Interview: 9/06/08)

The ways my students conceptualized social justice do not seem very different from

my own or those expressed by Mohan and Walker (2008) in their survey of students and

faculty in an educational studies department at a Canadian university. They do, however,

provide a more compassionate and less essentialized portrayal of "privileged" students than

the students in Vandrick's (1995) study. Moreover, the opinions of the students below

certainly contradict Vandrick's contention that privileged students have no desire to contest

the status quo since it benefits them. Instead, a number of students disapproved of the

widening gap between the rich and the poor and the absence of human rights in China and

expressed a desire for a more egalitarian society.

> *So lots of people, even the rich people, they come to Canada. We feel like we cannot fit in the society because in China if you are rich people, you have power, right. You have the different feeling because people know you are rich and they are like, kind of respect you and you get different -- people treat you differently. But here, everyone is equal.*
> (Barbara (20): Interview: 9/06/08)

> *China society it's a big problem now because rich people and the poor people have a huge gap, so it's difficult to resolve this problem. But if I running the country, I will rethink the human rights and I think make the poor people, give the*

poor people more benefit and give them more rights and the power to reach the normal life.

<div align="center">(Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)</div>

Wendy: *China now is developing so rapidly and there are many chances to make money and maybe it will be the next superpower. Wouldn't you have better opportunities there?*

Keith: *...I don't care about I must make lots of money in a full chance society. I'm more focused on how can I get a quiet and peace life, can the system support me to achieve this?*

Wendy: *And what characteristics (in the society) are you looking for to give you that?*

Keith: *A relatively strong system to secure everyone can have an equal kind of life. I think it's a better system.*

<div align="center">(Keith (40): Interview: 28/02/08)</div>

In small groups students discussed rights, obligations and values and whether these were universal or culturally-specific. We then engaged in a whole class dialogical exchange (See Appendix I: Rights and Obligations).

Students: *(calling out) People should have the right to marry, no matter the same gender. People should have the right to any religion. People should have the right to give birth.*

Wendy: *...and probably particularly relevant to China right, because you can only have one child.*[15]

Wendy: *Do you think these rights are the same in every country? Does your country have those rights or different rights?*

Susan: *Some are the same and some are different. Like right to freedom of speech. If you say something bad words about the government, the police will come and arrest you immediately. Some people disappeared. They never found. There's only one party in China, the People's Party. And when they vote, we don't have the paper for vote...*

Male voice: *...and only one person can be the president.*

Alex: *So there's no other party, only one party?*

Voices: *Yeah, yeah*

Alex: *So that's why you don't vote because there's only one party?*

Students: *Yeah*

Wendy: *So the difference in democracy is that the [leaders] are chosen by the people, right. But in discussing freedom of speech, do you think Canada has freedom of speech?*

Students: *Yes, yes...*

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[15] This could have been an opportunity for a more contextualized discussion around why this right has been revoked in China; however, later a student took up this issue in her final presentation on the Advantages and Disadvantages of the One-Child Policy in China.

Wendy: *Can you say whatever you like in Canada?*

Students: *No, no.*

Wendy: *In fact Canada is quite strict and it doesn't have freedom of speech completely. It has the right to speak freely but there are certain things you cannot say. For example if you say bad things about another person's culture or religion…they call that hate speech. So, for example, there was a man, a teacher, who believed that the Holocaust didn't happen. Do you know the Holocaust was when the Nazis killed many Jewish people? And he said that did not happen, and he taught children that at school. So he was charged with hate, hate against Jewish people…because you're not allowed to promote hate against other cultures or other religions…*

Student: *Freedom of assembly.*

Wendy: *Yes, that's a good one, freedom to gather together, freedom to protest.*

Student: *Do you have to apply?*

Wendy: *Aah, sometimes it just happens, it's spontaneous, but sometimes they have organized protests…if you are going to have a march, you have to alert the city.*

Alex: *Yeah. You have to let the city know. But in Canada, it's fine, you can do it, no problem.*

Wendy: *Do you think values can be different from one culture to another?*

Brenda: *Yeah, like (long pause) In different cultures, there are different values, like in our culture we don't have freedom of speech, we don't, we can't go in the street and say whatever we want, we'll be arrested. I think it's different in the United States, they have the right to talk about everything.*

Wendy: *Well, yes and no, sometimes in North America, in the United States, they* **say** *they have freedom of speech, but sometimes if you say something against the government, they don't like it. For example, do you know the band, The Dixie Chicks? It's a country band, very famous and they spoke about the invasion of Iraq and they said they disagreed with it. Their record sales went down, they didn't have any concerts. There were photographs of people taking all their CDs and throwing them in the garbage. So sometimes even in the United States, it's not so free if you're against the government.*

Pat: *But that's not government, just people. That's different*

Wendy: *That's true. They couldn't arrest them. So in the constitution they have freedom of speech.*

Voice: *Yeah.*

Wendy: *…but in terms of their career, it had a really big effect. But you're right, in the constitution they couldn't do anything to them…*

Brenda: *…but in the United States, you can talk against the President. You can say what you want…. But in my country if you talk against the President they will arrest you. Another thing, they have put some new police so they're gonna check your cell phone to see if you have*

anything against the President in your cell phone…. Sometimes they
can say, "Can I see your cell phone?" And you have to give it to them.
(Students: Classroom Discussions: 09/07)

In this dialogical exchange I tried to avoid asserting my identity as a Western liberal democrat by problematizing the conflation of Universal Rights with North American culture (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 281). Inherent in my criticism of America's freedom of speech was my understanding of ideological hegemony, that is the power of public opinion to suppress and control (Gramsci, 1975). However, the students disagreed with me, comparing the lack of overt sovereign power in North America with their own more authoritarian regimes.

So what implications can I draw from this data in answer to my first research theme? What are my students' conceptions of social justice, fairness, equality and social transformation? Do they differ from mine, a critical multicultural pedagogue, who was socialized within a Western democratic tradition as well as an authoritarian, racist apartheid regime?

The conclusions I would draw are:

- Social justice is a fairly vague and nebulous social vision but perhaps that is more desirable than a prescriptive definition that could possibly limit and restrict (Mohan & Walker, 2008).

- I tried to avoid a Eurocentric my country/your country, good/bad binary by questioning the assumption that North America is unproblematically democratic and free (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; May, 1999; Willinsky, 1998). However, it was the students themselves who identified and acknowledged human rights infringements in their own countries and challenged my views.

- A common thread among my students was the desire for a more democratic and egalitarian society.

- Most of my students, both immigrants and internationals coming from a variety of socio-economic and political backgrounds, did seem to care!

- Therefore, I wasn't *forcing* a social justice agenda on my students, replacing one hegemonic discourse with another, as I had feared (Gore, 1992); instead, I was providing opportunities for us to discuss what social justice might mean, at least within the context of my classroom and my students.

4.4 Problematizing the ideological construction of Canadian identity: "We should never forget."

Uncovering Canada's systemic, historic racism and colonialism has important implications for my second research theme: "Are students indirectly pressured to conform to the more powerful identities of their teacher and the norms and values of a Eurocentric, Western individualistic liberalism?"

Firstly, as Willinsky (1998) has said, although we cannot undo the disastrous effects of colonialism, the education system has a responsibility to "revise its faulty lessons" (p. 259). This is especially important in an ESL class, since it is the (visible minority) students themselves who bear the negative consequences of this past. By problematizing it, students are more likely to recognize their present marginalization. Moreover, awareness of historic and systemic racism within Canada is important in order for students to be able to identify and challenge racism in their own lives.

Secondly, many theorists have stated that education, particularly language education, has an underlying assimilationist objective, namely "helping" students, especially

immigrants, take advantage of Western ideals of freedom, liberty and equality. Moreover, the inclusion of a neo-liberal multicultural narrative celebrating diversity has done little to disrupt this hidden assimilationist agenda since minorities are accepted only within the strict parameters of liberalism (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Moodley, 1995; Parekh, 2006; Sleeter, 1995).

This is illustrated in Lee's (2007) study of a critical EAP Program in which she found that some teachers viewed "critical engagement" as trying to enlighten their students about the deception, and oppressiveness of the Chinese government vis-à-vis the liberal West. But students resented the ways teachers constructed negative images of their country, and felt uncomfortable and embarrassed by these descriptions. Thus, by critiquing *Canadian* society, I hoped to avoid conflating critical pedagogy with a Western liberal ideology, which in itself could be yet another hegemonic "technology of power" (Foucault, 1977; Gore, 1993, 1998).

Thirdly, I hoped that criticism of some aspects of Canadian society would enable students to reflect on and critique some of the oppression in their own cultures. In this way we could scrutinize *all* cultures (May, 1999) and construct a universal critique of unfairness and injustice rather than a "my country/your country" binary in which Canada is usually positioned as "the good."

In the following sections, I discuss (i) how the students and I engaged in a critique of Canada's racist past and (ii) the implications of this critique.

4.4.1 Introducing Canada's racist past

I began the first week of class with a discussion of Canada's racist past, using two current newspaper articles *Commemorating a Race Riot,* (Pablo, 2007, p. 15) and *("Asian*

history milestones in B. C.," 2007), Vancouver Sun, Sept. 1, 2007, C11. The articles

discussed the 100th anniversary of the riots by white Canadians against Asians.[16]

Students also read a reader's response, entitled, '*Shame' the Worst Trend in

Journalism, (Howard, 2007). Howard suggests that "many Canadians would be pleased to

see a halt to articles that sensationalize racial incidents". In their oral journals, students

were asked to respond to questions about these articles (See Appendix J: Oral Journal: Race

Riots).

 The following quotations are from their oral journals and private interviews.

> *I saw the title and suddenly all my memories just come. Hundred years ago many Chinese people went to USA. Many people in China said let's go to America. You can have a lot of money. This person deceived them. They worked as illegal workers and they suffer a lot. Most of the time the employer weren't polite to them.*
> (Sam (21): interview: 05/03/08)

 Other students expressed shock and concern that this could happen again:

> *I'm really shocked when I read this article. I'm an immigrant from China. From my knowledge I always saw Canada is a tolerant country without race discrimination, at least no race riot. I thought Canada is a multicultural country, an immigrant country which successfully make all the cultures get together and develop together, but after I read this article I realized in fact that Canada has the same race problem as other countries…. Now, frankly speaking, after I read this article I became a little worried about the future situation of the Chinese immigrant. Who can make sure the race riot cannot happen again in the future?*

In response to the Howard's (2007) article suggesting that many Canadians would be

pleased to see a halt to articles that sensationalize racial incidents, the student wrote:

> *I feel surprised again about that many Canadians would be pleased to see a halt to articles that is about racial incidents happened in the past. I think it's a shame we cannot face our past or history. I think we should make all of our people especially the children the young generation to know what happened 100 years*

[16] Caucasians wanted to move First Nations to reserves and get rid of Asians in order to maintain a 'white Canada'. The articles also describe other racist measures at the time including the refusal to allow the *Komagata Maru* to dock, the Chinese head tax, the ban on Chinese immigration to Canada, and the denial of the right to vote for Asians until 1947 and for First Nations until 1960.

ago in Vancouver, if we don't take measures at present maybe the incident will happened again in the future. I think the immigrant country like Canada, discrimination is a big problem. I think the only way to deal with it is that we will never ignore it, we will never forget it. We can find our way from our past mistakes. It is dangerous when we try to forget the past. In fact, history has demonstrated the fact many times before.
(John (40): oral journal: 09/07)

Another student explained:

I was surprised when I read this article. A couple of questions suddenly popped up from my mind. How can citizens of one of the most tolerant countries in the world discriminate against others? Why would they be that rude to people from other places? What causes them hate people that much? In my mind Canadians are very nice. This article really surprises me and shocks me a lot. In my opinion I think we should know what was happened in the past. Because this is a part of the history of Vancouver, so we should not forget it. However, the most important thing that I concern is this might cause somebody to do the same things as 100 years ago in nowadays. This would cause a serious social problem because there are large numbers of foreigners in Canada nowadays.
(Colin (19): oral journal: 09/07)

Although reactions were varied, most students were very surprised, even shocked and most felt it was important to learn about past discrimination in order to avoid making the same mistakes again. However, students usually didn't identify the legacy of inequality that past discrimination leaves, nor did they (at this point in the course, the first week) identify any lingering systemic racism in Canada. Rather they reported feeling "lucky" to live in present-day Canada, where such overt discrimination is against the law. This supports Auerbach's (1993a) contention that students often do not recognize their own marginalization since the dominant culture is so pervasive; consequently, disadvantage becomes normalized (Foucault, 1977). However, the article made students more aware of racism in Canada, and so opened up the possibilities for discussing racism in their own lives and how to deal with it.

To engage students in a discussion of the legacy of past oppression, they watched the

film "*Where the Spirit Lives"* (Pittman, 1989) about residential schools in Canada in the

'30s.[17] Before showing the film, I elicited what students knew about the First Nations of

Canada. This resulted in some negative stereotypes, unquestioned assumptions about their

"unearned privileges" as well as a few more informed understandings. The film provided

the opportunity for dialogue around the consequences of prior treatment on the First Nations

culture and social life and the reasons for their so-called "special treatment" and land

claims.

Students discussed the film in groups in class (See Appendix K: Discussion: Where

the Spirit Lives). I also asked them to answer questions and discuss their opinions in their

oral journals (See Appendix L: Oral Journal: Where the Spirit Lives). These questions have

the potential to be highly-charged, especially when students come from cultures in conflict

with one another either in the present or historically. Consequently, I have to carefully

determine whether the discussion would be too inflammatory, too accusatory, or too hurtful

to discuss openly (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Therefore, I usually have students answer in their

written or oral journals since I believe, like Stein (2004) that not all personal experiences

should be aired in the classroom because it is not always a safe environment. In such

situations, I dialogue privately with them since a dialogical pedagogy can also be in the

form of a written (or spoken) private interaction between the teacher and student.

On the other hand, sometimes open discussions can instigate critical teaching

moments, but the teacher needs to be sensitive and careful to read the potential outcome.

Because of the strong bond and trusting environment in my R11 class, they discussed the

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[17] The film is a vivid account of the legalized abduction of Indian children by government agents in
the 1930s and the church schools' ruthless and often abusive methods of assimilation.

film in class and also responded privately in their journals. The following extracts are taken

from their in-class work, homework assignments and private interviews.

> Kerry: *Before that I never know anything about First Nations. What is a First Nation, I only know a little about this period of history but I don't know about the Indians' hearts, what do they think, their deep heart. But after I read that movie, I can feel they are -- I want to give some sympathy, some compassion to them...*
>
> Wendy: *Also with that movie, I wanted to see if, because you come from China, you're losing your language, your culture, was there any connection between your experience and that movie?*
>
> Kerry: *Not as deep. Sometimes I feel a little, a little upset, but we have our Chinese circle. And we have friends so I don't feel very upset like I feel in that movie... I think some Western race is very open-minded and can face to their history in a very open-minded. But some Asian countries can't treat their problems in this way. It remind me to think that one German Prime Minister can stand on his knees just say sorry on behalf of Germans to other nationalities. But other -- it can't happen in Japan. So I think different nationalities treat the same problem in different ways.*
>
> Wendy: *Yes, people have treated other people badly in many parts of history, but it's taken many years for Canadians to accept their past.*
> (Kerry (37): Interview: 24/01/08)

Most students were similarly moved by the film and said it gave them more

understanding and sympathy towards First Nations and their issues. Canada's seeming

openness and acceptance of past mistakes impressed them greatly and many compared this

with their own governments' lack of transparency as exemplified by the following student:

> *We don't have much freedom to talk about the government. If they do something bad they will hide. They hide the bad things. In Canada it is quite open and I think it is a good thing.*
> (Dawn (19): Interview: 04/02/07)

As with most issues that moved or intrigued them, many students said they had

discussed the film with their friends and family both in Canada and in their own countries.

Dawn continued:

> *We want to learn English but we also want to join -- not join -- like join the Canadian society... Yes, integrate. So I think by knowing this background knowledge is helpful. I think if you want to stay here and integrate into the*

society, you should know the culture and the history. So when people talk about it
you are not embarrassed because you didn't know.
(Dawn (19): Interview: 04/02/08)

Very few students saw their situation as immigrants as similar to the determined and often abusive strategies used to assimilate First Nations into Canadian culture. While most talked about the difficulties of adapting to a new culture, they all believed they had a choice and they didn't feel pressured to assimilate because Canada was a "multicultural country that protected and respected all cultures." Most of the Chinese and Indo-Canadian students also felt their cultures were so well-represented in this area of Canada that their cultural identities were in no ways being threatened.

This would appear to support Kymlicka's (1995, 1998) contention that immigrants don't want and don't expect the "special treatment" afforded the First Nations because of past oppression. However, it also indicates that students don't always make the connection between historic racism and the legacy of linguistic imperialism. Nor did most students recognize the disjunction between their view of Canada as a tolerant, democratic country and their own experiences of marginalization which many later recounted to me (See Chapter 5.1.5) – what Dei (1996) calls the clash between the professed democratic values of North American and the profound racism within society.

On the other hand, one student saw parallels between herself coming to Canada in order to learn English, and the main protagonist in the film "*Where the Spirit Lives*" who was forced to learn English. She explains that, like Amelia, she didn't want to go to school every day but wanted to go back to China. Remarkably, however, she concluded that the film had inspired her "to try her best to learn English" even under difficult circumstances. (Jane: Oral Journal 09/07)

Her comment caused me to reflect on how our best intentions to alert students to oppressive or discriminatory behaviours may indeed result in the opposite! Since critical pedagogues are encouraged not to defer to students, but to challenge them (Crookes & Lehner, 1998), I discussed her conclusion privately with her after class, pushing her to think through her comments and asking her if she thought it was acceptable to be treated so badly in the pursuit of English. I am not sure what, if any, effect this had, but as Kumashiro (2002) points out, rather than pretending we can solve all the problems of oppression and injustice, we must accept there will always be an element of unknowability.

In asking students to reflect on whether anything similar had happened in their own countries, many pointed to former Japanese and British imperialism. A couple of students saw a similarity with Chinese actions in Tibet and the treatment of people from rural areas of China.

> *You know Tibet? I have a Tibet friend…. He told me about the communists, the government. They send the soldiers over to there. I think they got hurt worse than in this movie because they kill people. He told me they kill people. He just told me but I didn't see it. So that is not bothering me. But when I saw this movie, I think the [Chinese]government, the people, really do something.*
> (Susan (37): oral journal: 10/07)

> *I also think about the situation in China. Because in China it also has the same situation. In China if you live in the country and you not live in the city, you want to go to the Shanghai, the big city to find a job. So people call this -- people call this people the 'foreigner' Chinese. Also, you can't speak Shanghainese, in some situations you also feel abused.*
> (Pam (32): oral journal:10/07)

In his oral journal, John compared his school education in China to the residential schools:

> *[My] education made all the students the same, it really killed the creativity. The worst thing was that the education system totally gave up the Chinese traditional culture which is so brilliant in the world. On the other hand, it didn't learn students good and useful from Western culture such as the free and democratic ideas. In my opinion, my school education was based on political purpose.*
> (John (40): Oral Journal 10/07)

In our private interview John expanded on his views of the film:

John: *I think that film is a reflection of the Canadian government in the past. They just think their culture is superior than other cultures so they forced the aboriginal people to change their customs, change their language and change them to Christians, make them believe in God. I don't think it's right. I object to that because there's actually wisdom. I don't mean the knowledge, I think there's a difference between wisdom and knowledge. I think the aboriginal Canadian people are like other ancient people. They have a real wisdom to life.*

Wendy: *Did you see any comparisons between that, and yourself, coming to Canada and losing your culture?*

John: *Yes, I can see a similarity because just the way is different. For Canadian today, they just make immigrants change gradually. They no use force, but for the aboriginal people they use force.*

Wendy: *Did you see any parallels in other countries? Has China done anything similar?*

John: *Sure, sure. For example in China the communist government will force the Tibet people to transform their ideas.*

(John (40): Interview: 27/02/08)

In my R14 class in summer 2008, instead of an oral journal, I asked them to do some research and interview Canadians on their response to the government's recent apology to the First Nations (See Appendix M: Contact Assignment: Apology to First Nations). The purpose of the contact assignment was to give my students the opportunity to access multiple views, so I was not positioned as the "Canadian mouthpiece." I also encouraged them to interview Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds in order to contest the notion of English speakers as white Caucasians. They interviewed Indo- Chinese – Thai – and Anglo -Canadians, aged between 16 and 60, who expressed a variety of opinions. Below are two responses from my students' assignment:

Interviewee: 44 years, male, Anglo-Canadian

I think the aboriginal people need more than an apology and a small amount of compensation. They need seats in Parliament so they can really be a part of this country as this is their land which was taken away by force because what they did in the residential schools was horrible.

(Student Interviewer: Rosa: Summer 2008)

Interviewee: 20 years, female, Indo-Canadian

> *Some of the First Nations people felt better after the government apologized to them. However, the painful memory would never be erase so easily. No matter how much money was given to the students for compensation, it will never go away for many years.*
>
> (Student Interviewer: Claire: Summer 2008)

4.4.2 Implications

It is difficult to fully assess the impact of these discussions (*Asian Race Riots* and *Where the Spirit Lives*) or to know where they will lead in the future (Benesch, 1991, 2001; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Pennycook, 2004; Vandrick, 1995; Weiler, 1996). I cannot make any conclusive judgements, but I can present my speculations based on an analysis of the data.

I think learning about the abuse suffered by the First Nations gave my students a far better understanding of the social conditions of aboriginal people in Canada and more sympathy for their claims. Some students were even able to connect this abuse to similar oppression in their own countries.

I think the discussion of systemic racism in Canada gave them a more complex understanding of Canada, one that included the "dark" side. This may have been the necessary stimulus to enable them to connect with their own experiences of being "othered," experiences that they later shared with me in private interviews and with the class (See Chapter 5.1.5). Being aware of racism in Canada may have even contributed to giving some of them the necessary confidence not only to recognize rudeness, but also to challenge it (See Chapter 5.1.6). They now knew it existed, even in tolerant, multicultural Canada, and they knew it was unacceptable.

But perhaps more importantly, by revealing and questioning Canada's concealed history of oppressive behaviour, I was able to counter the "hidden" curriculum, which indirectly pressures students to conform to the norms and values of Eurocentric, Western liberalism, which is overtly or covertly conveyed through the school ethos, the teachers, curricula, tests and textbooks.

Instead, I was able to construct with my students the possibility of transformation for *all of us.* In other words, my critical classroom was not an attempt to make them aware of the evils in their own society, but rather alert us to the inequality, unfairness and injustice in all our cultures. Moreover, I believe that it was *because* of my critical stance with regard to the West, in particular Canada, that my students were as open and outspoken about their own societies, both in our classroom and in our private interviews.

Heterogeneous multicultural classes such as mine which consist of recent and long-term immigrants, and international students, from a variety of social, political and educational backgrounds, provide a unique opportunity for teachers and students to focus not only on how minorities are othered by the majority host culture, but also how racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression occur among minority cultures as well (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; May, 1999; Sleeter, 1995). It thus provides an opportunity for addressing all forms of oppression through a critical, dialogic pedagogy.

Still, many teachers worry about how this is operationalised in the classroom. In the following chapter, I discuss the difficulties I encountered, and how I addressed them with respect to the key elements of a critical classroom.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: REFLECTIONS ON NEGOTIATING A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In investigating my students and my responses to a critical language pedagogy, I first had to address how we co-constructed the curriculum, an essential element of CLP. In Chapter 4, I discussed the challenges I faced in this respect and the voices that are missing from my data, the students who dropped out. I also analyzed the data which related to my first research question and concluded that even though my students and I had been socialized in different socio-cultural and educational systems, we could construct a mutually acceptable social justice agenda, another crucial element of CLP.

Closely linked to this question, was whether my more powerful identity as the teacher intentionally or unintentionally resulted in pressuring students to conform to my more "enlightened" Western democratic ideals. By exposing Canada's racist past, and focusing instead on a critique of all cultures, I hoped, in part, to mediate this stance.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how my students and I negotiated the other key aspects of a critical language class:

1. Connecting the microcosmic classroom to the external macrostructures

2. Linguistic and pragmatic issues

3. Issues of agency and empowerment

4. If and how critical learning can be transformed into praxis

Through an analysis of the data extrapolated from our engagement with these key concerns, I was able to address the following research questions:

- Do students show agency and transformation by challenging inequalities, traditional assumptions, the teacher's opinions, and the status quo?

- How do students and I from diverse cultural, political and economic systems resolve differences on controversial topics?

Finally, I relate my findings to my overarching question:

- Does a critical language pedagogy better meet the sociopolitical-cultural and academic needs of my English language learners?

5.1 Connecting the classroom to the outside world: "Even ESL students have rights!"

An essential element of CLP is making learning relevant to the students by connecting the classroom to the political and social structures of the outside world. In this way students learn to how to challenge oppressive behaviours and negotiate for themselves and others a better life (Auerbach, 1993a; Benesch, 2001; Morgan, 1997, 1998, 2004). I tried to do this by introducing a number of problem-posing activities, dialogical situations, role plays and other activities in the class. I will present and discuss a few examples below and show how students related them to their lives outside the classroom.

5.1.1 Bullying

One of the most popular situations was the case of school bullying, which I had taken from a real situation reported in the newspaper (Moore, 2007 in The Globe and Mail).

Problem-posing situation:

A Grade 10 student wears a pink shirt to school. His classmates make fun of him in the school grounds, laughing, pointing fingers and shouting derogatory remarks, such as 'gay' or 'faggot'. Work together in small groups to find possible ways the school might deal with the situation, looking at the rights, obligations and values of all those involved. Write this up on chart paper and present to the class.

The following is an example of what one group produced on chart paper:

  Group One:

    1. There should be a kind [code] of conduct held by school
    2. They [the bullies] should be punished
        i) Oral warning
        ii) Written information to parents
        iii) Expelled after 3 warnings
    3. Training classes/seminars about human rights

  Obligation
  1. To protect every student
  2. Provide safe and friendly environment
  3. Educate students to respect others' values
        i) Fairness
        ii) Compassionate
        iii) Tolerate
        iv) Loyalty [word crossed out]

After the students presented their solutions, I told them what had actually happened: A group of Grade 12 students had text-messaged their friends, encouraging them to "wear pink" the following day to school in order to send a message to the bullies. This had resulted in the bullies leaving the school in humiliation. The action of "wearing pink" to school has come to represent an annual, ritualized stance against bullying and homophobia in schools.

My students were very impressed with this outcome and cheered wildly. One student was profoundly affected by this activity and talked about it at length in her interview. She had discussed it with her mother and sister, and referred to it when advising her best friend, whose son had been similarly treated at school. For her, it became a symbol of North American individualism.

  Susan: *My best friend's son goes to school, and was wearing something. The little boy, like, 10 years old -- and the other boys laughing at him. And then I ask my friend, she is a single mom. She always talks to me about this…and I ask her, "How do you teach your son?" And she [said] "I*

just let him change the clothes." I remember you tell us the story about the guys who wear pink. I tell her "Don't!" She say "Why?" The boy, you ask -- "Do you want to change your eyes or your hair for other people? This is not a good way to solve the problem. You tell them, you don't want to play with me, fine, then you are not my friends." Then I ask my son, what can you do? He say, "Even you don't want to play with me that is fine". I think about that [situation] a lot. I tell my sister, my mom, and my husband…I teach them. I remember that. I tell my friend, I learn one topic from my teacher -- I give her the whole story. From this story I say "teach your son like that". Yeah, that [activity] changed my mind. I never know this before. I really confused…then after you give the answer, I'm really surprised…and now I know the answer. In North America you don't need to compliments? Or compromise?

Wendy: *Conform?*

Susan: *Yeah, conform. You don't need to conform. If you can have a good idea, you are a leader. But that is not in China, you are the same. My friend say if you let your son do this -- very unique and maybe nobody play with him -- so no friends. So what do you think? (She asks me)*
         (Susan (36): Interview: 30/01/07)

Up till this point, I had been very impressed with Susan's connecting what we had done in class and applying it to her own circumstances in a way that challenged the status quo and contested oppression – so very CLP! But then I started to worry about the implications, the "unintended consequences".

Firstly, her statement: "In North America you don't need to conform" started alarm bells ringing in my head. In actual fact, North America, and this particular West coast city have their own subtle brand of conformity, a Western, rule-bound liberalism, that is often very difficult for outsiders to gauge until the invisible line is breached (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 1995).

My second concern was that Susan now had "the answer" and was applying the situation of a Grade 10 high school student to one that involved a 10-year-old boy. So in my reply I tried to be more cautious and guarded, encouraging Susan to carefully consider the context:

Wendy: *Sometimes it may be easier for him to conform a little bit because maybe he needs to develop to be strong. I don't think you can say "You have to be strong"….But when he is so young, sometimes you want to also protect him, right? So you have to see what the situation is like and go in little steps…you have to decide on the child's personality, whether the child has friends. There are many things to consider. It is not so clear cut.*

Previously, (See Chapter 2.3.1) I criticized Morgan (1997) for "empowering" his female students from Hong Kong, asking who would take the responsibility for "unintended consequences?" And yet my activity had the possibility of a similar unintended outcome which I would not have been aware of had I not had the opportunity to discuss the issue further with Susan. It brought home to me once again the "messiness" and complexity of critical pedagogy and the need for the critical teacher to be constantly alert and questioning. Nothing can be simply generalized to all contexts; the situated, local application must be taken into account (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; May, 1999; Nieto, 1999, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). This insight did not invalidate the activity, but the discussion needed to be taken another step, perhaps by asking the students to consider alternative outcomes and their repercussions or at least by emphasizing the importance of contextualization.

5.1.2 Cultural accommodation

An important element of a critical pedagogy, especially when students come from many different cultural backgrounds, is to foster an inclusive classroom, in which different cultures are understood and accepted. In order to begin such a dialogue, and observe how students negotiated cultural differences, I gave the students the following situation about a student who had been expelled from her gym class for wearing a hijab (See Appendix Q: Problem-posing: Hijab situation).

Problem-posing situation:

A young high school student is a devout Muslim. She wears a traditional *hijab* to class. In her gym class, her teacher asks her to remove it. She refuses. The teacher expels her from the class. The student is very upset. She tells her parents she doesn't want to go back to this class. Discuss the situation and then write on chart paper how the school should handle the situation. Consider the rights and obligations of all the people involved.

Below is a short extract from the group's discussion. What is particularly interesting in this dialogical exchange is how fluidly students were able to negotiate cultural rights, language and religious differences:

Pat: *So maybe you know…*[18]
Brenda: *Yes, I know because in my country you have to wear that. You have to cover yourself…*[19]
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
            But I choose to not wear scarf. But it wasn't legal. And whenever our principal or whoever saw me that I'm not wearing anything, she punished me….
Voice: *You **have to** wear a hijab?*
Brenda: *Yeah. In my country, yeah.*
Keith: *Don't you have some issue with the weather? You know in the Middle East, the weather is very hot and dry.*
Brenda: *Yeah, yeah*
Keith: *It's just traditional. Here it's not necessary, physically not necessary. But I think the tradition cause…*
Brenda: *No, no, no. We have to wear it here.*

Up till this point, while not officially "on task," that is, trying to solve the problem, the group had connected the situation to the everyday life of their classmate and all of them were engaged in trying to understand Brenda's culture more deeply:

Keith: *(getting back to the question)   First one is obligations, and values and solutions.*

---

[18] The ellipsis in this conversation represents one student's words being interrupted by another
[19] 12 lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Wendy: *And remember you're looking at it in Canada. What are the rights in Canada?*

Pat: *Difficult to say right or wrong.*

Keith: *It's not necessary to discuss this. It's right.*

Brenda: *Yeah.*

Keith: *It should be. So in Canada, obligations, what do you think?*

Brenda: *I think they should respect...*

Pat: *...that's their religion -- on the other hand...*

Keith: *Religion of everyone should be respected equally, should be treated equally.*

Brenda: *Actually teachers, was it the teacher who told her? The teacher, the teachers should respect every religion.*

Keith: *Teacher expelled her.*

Brenda: *Teachers should respect... (writing)*

Keith: *...students' religion.*

Brenda: *...every student's religion.*

Darcy: *What's your religion?*

Brenda: *Muslim. Teachers should respect every student's religion.*

Pat: *...but if she wears hijab, she can't play.*

Brenda: *Well, if you want to play, you have to wear shorts.[20]*

……

Pat: *Scarf is not a problem when you play sports. Long clothes, you can't run...I think students should wear clothes suitable for gym class but also keep their tradition.*

Keith: *...adapt...*

Wendy: *Accommodate means you can do both. You can be covered but in a way that allows you to do gym. That's accommodate, balance...*

Group: *Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.*

Brenda: *The students have the accommodate...*

Keith: *...accommodate is a verb.*

Brenda: *Students should accommodate...*

Keith: *Just use a simple word like balance – tradition with religion.*

Eric: *Balance? What means?*

Keith: *It's the same meaning.*

Brenda: *It's better actually.*

Brenda and David: *Students should balance the religion and...*

Keith: *...and gym class*

Eric: *Let's talk about the rights.*

Pat: *...but I think teacher don't have a right -- kicking her out...*

Brenda: *...to kick her out. The teacher doesn't have the right to kick ...*

Pat: *Teachers...*

Keith: *...have no rights to expel students from class just because they wear traditional religion clothes.*

---

[20] 10 lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Up to this point, students were trying to critically deal with the actual problem, (probably because I had approached the group!) discussing the rights and obligations of all those involved, and looking at it from both the perspectives of the student and the contingencies of the gym class. In addition, points of grammatical structure and vocabulary were discussed, clarified or amended. The remainder of the dialogue below is interspersed with discussion around the religious differences and attempts to resolve the problem:

Keith: *Do you really believe in Allah? -- or just the religion of your family, so you follow?*
Brenda: *Well, Allah is the God.*
Keith: *Do you believe in it?*
Brenda: *In God ?? (sounds incredulous)*
Keith: *I just want to know. We don't believe.*
Pat: *In China, we don't believe.*
Keith: *In China, you know we don't have religion.*
Brenda: *You don't have religion??*
Pat: *Yeah.*
Darcy: *What's the guy called?*
Keith: *Allah.*
Brenda: *Are you Buddhists?*
Pat: *No, no, no.*
Brenda: *You have no religion?*
Keith: *No, no, no.*
Darcy: *I believe in my father. (laughter)*
Brenda: *Gosh!!*
Pat: *Everyone has religion, yeah? Everyone has to…*
Brenda: *…No, everyone must have **one** religion (misunderstands "has to"). But the Muslim is two really, one of them is Sunni and one of them is Shii. I'm Shii.*
Darcy: *What's the difference?*
Keith: *(going back to the topic) …I think the first solution is school should…*
Brenda: *God is the same and the difference is between our leader – who came first, second and third.*
Keith: *The first solution is the school should ask the teacher…*
Darcy: *…to apologise*
Keith: *Yes, to have a formal apologise to the students. Because of his wrong action, a kind of discrimination about student's religion.[21]*
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Wendy: *OK, time's up. Choose someone to present your group's decision.*

---

[21] 7 lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Brenda: *Am I the one, can somebody else go?*

Brenda presented the following summary to the class:

Brenda: *We discussed the points and the first one is the teacher should respect different religions because we have a lot of religions, different ones and the teacher should respect every religion. And the second one is the students should balance the religion and the gym. Like the student they wear hijab to cover their hair and something long up to your knee, and pants. So the student who wants to play in the gym class can wear her hijab and something suitable for the class, for the gym class. The rights is the teachers don't have the right to kick the student out of the gym class that wear the traditional clothes, and students have the right to wear the traditional clothes. The teacher who kicked out the girl should apologise formally to the student and the student should accommodate their clothes with the gym class so there should be a balance between the hijab clothes and the gym clothes.*

Wendy: *I think you came up with a very sensible solution. These are some of the situations that arise in Canada all the time so it's an interesting discussion to hear the different perspectives. And it's hard to know what is the exact, right answer. And what your group suggested was a compromise that is not going to insult her religion and that's often the way that we choose in Canada.*

(Classroom Discussion: 10/07)

A lot of learning about religious differences occurred in their preparatory dialogue. There was also a lot of language negotiation amongst the students as they tried to make meaning of the situation. They helped each other with vocabulary, grammatical construction, rephrasing, clarifying ideas and expressions. They were also thinking critically as they determined the rights and obligations of the main protagonists in the situation. Their final conclusion provided a nuanced response which avoided a dogmatic one-sided outcome, but rather tried to balance the student's rights with the practical requirements of a gym class. Brenda clearly emerged as the "expert," the representative of her culture, since she was bombarded with questions by the other students in her group; however, she also clearly de-essentialized an often essentialized and misunderstood religion, explaining how she rebelled against some of the traditional requirements of her

religion (Allcott, 1992; Appiah, 1994; May, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Sleeter,

1995).

In our private interview, I asked her if she had found it interesting to discuss the Hijab

situation.

> *Yeah! Because I didn't know anything about Chinese people. They don't have*
> *any religion. And so, like, well I have some beliefs myself, but I just don't believe*
> *in hijab…. For me it felt good, talking, because I know a lot of information about*
> *that [my culture].*
> (Brenda (19): Interview: 03/03/08)

The other Muslim student in the class reiterated her sentiment:

> *Islam is a very talkative religion at the moment, so it's very important to have*
> *someone who can represent it to talk about it so that all the class can learn about*
> *things because the media doesn't say those things. Because a fanatic Islam guy,*
> *he won't be saying those things I'm saying right now. He would say: "No you*
> *have to wear a burqa." So to bring it up like this, (in class), it's nice so*
> *everybody can get to know about it.*
> (Alex (26): Interview: 23/01/08)

While Duff (2002) and Talmy (2005) found that some students resisted being cast as

the "cultural representatives" in their classroom, these two Muslim students welcomed the

opportunity to provide a different view of their religion, which is so often misunderstood

and maligned. Perhaps a major difference was that in Duff's study it was the *teacher* who

called up the students to 'explain' their culture whereas in my class, Brenda emerged

naturally as the "expert" in her small group discussion with her classmates. Similarly, Alex

often volunteered information about his religion and culture.

The other students also emphasized how much they had learnt from this discussion,

and how important it was to learn about other cultures and their rights since Canada was a

multicultural country. Many students also discussed this topic with friends and family

outside of class. This finding supports the contention that immigrants desire to understand

more clearly what the host country's expectations are (Kymlicka, 1998; Modood, 2001). I

did this activity in all my classes and all the students came to similar solutions:

- the teacher had no right to expel the student,

- the teacher should apologise to the student,

- every student has the right to follow her own religious requirements,

- the school had an obligation to protect the student, but the student also had an
  obligation to try to balance her beliefs with the requirements of the gym class which
  might necessitate some kind of clothing that enabled her to move freely. Some
  students felt she might injure herself. On the other hand, one student told his group
  about a women's soccer team from the Middle East who had played in a national
  match wearing burqas.

What was interesting in the discussion in my Spring class (2008), was the presence of

a French-Canadian student in the group. Below is a short excerpt from their presentation to

the class which shows his different perspective:

Sonya: *From my point of view, I think the gym teacher doesn't have to expel her from class. And let us assume the short hijab, if she feels comfortable wearing it in the gym class, wear it. And this, we are talking about someone's right of religion. She's a Muslim so the teacher can't expel her because of her religion.*

Liz: *I agree with Sonya. Because it means if I attend all Caucasians' class and if I come to class and teacher says no you can't come to class you are yellow girl, you are Oriental, you cannot attend class; it's same meaning, right? Of course she cannot against the law because this is her religion. It's kind of discrimination to her.*
(Murmurs of agreement: Yeah, yeah, kind of...)

Sonya: *I have a point. In the first place the school accepted her registration, so they know she's a Muslim. And they accepted her in the school, so I don't think the teacher has a right to expel her because of her religion. Do you have a point?*

Simon: *Yeah, I disagree because for my personal experience when I forgot my shorts back to high school -- many times I forgot my shorts -- the teacher said you cannot come to class because I didn't have my shorts*

and t-shirt and things like that and he didn't give me the right to come to class -- because I wasn't in the proper uniform to play basketball or badminton.

Liz: *...but he knows you don't have a religion, right -- he's expecting that you are going to bring the uniform. But this situation is different.*

Tanya: *Yeah, different...*

Simon: *OK and the second point. If it is a long robe and you begin to run you hurt yourself. If she hurt herself very bad, the parents can sue the school.*

Tanya: *Oh!*

Simon: *It can be a big mess. That's why maybe this is the solution, ask the student to attend the specialized Muslim schools so like that the problem can be solved.*

(Classroom Discussion: 03/08)

Since Simon was the only Canadian, I followed up with a discussion on culture in our

interview:

Wendy: *Do you think it was important to talk about [this topic] to new immigrants because Canada is a very multicultural country?*

Simon: *Yes. It's important... Did you hear about Quebec during the last three months? They were talking about it. How to translate it, like reasonable...*

Wendy: *Accommodation. Reasonable accommodation. Yeah.*

Simon: *It is a new word from the dictionary next year because of this. So my own opinion is we have culture here and I think we are better to protect it a little bit more. Just sometime new immigrant have more rights than the people who was there before who set the city, who build everything.*

Wendy: *But everybody in Canada really is an immigrant, right? ...because everybody, except the First Nations, comes from somewhere else.*

Simon: *In this city. Not in Canada.*

Wendy: *Well, even French people only came to Canada 400 years ago. You know, 400 years is not a very long time.*

Simon: *Yes, yes. So it's controversial too. Sometimes I think we, like, we say 'yes' too much. Canada sometimes has difficulty to put their foot on the wall ...Many people are afraid of Muslims because of the image they have in the media... But you know, many people when they see a woman with the robe -- everybody say a comment -- but it's always never positive -- so people are, everybody is kind of scared of it or aware.*

Wendy: *But not all Muslims are terrorists.*

Simon: *Yes I know. But this was all we heard... so people have a tendency to generalize.*

Wendy: *So did our discussion about the hijab help you to understand the situation better?*

Simon: *It was quite interesting this one. When you start you don't really know what's saying, and the more you talk it out -- was very -- you go with the flow. So yes, I think in between shall be all right. [We] should find an in between.*

Simon's comments reflect the complexity of cultural identities. As a member of the majority Euro/Canadian culture his views reinforce Moodley's (1995) contention that the Franco/Anglo cultures give the impression they "own" the country. Yet his comments also need to be understood in terms of his identity as a member of the Quebecois minority which desires to safeguard its rights within Canada (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998). Simon also reflected on how his views had broadened as a result of being exposed to alternative perspectives: "Because, me I look at it from outside. It's funny. It's a completely different view from when I look at Quebec now. I look from a completely different view from when you are inside"

 (Simon (24) Interview: 19/06/08).

This problem-posing situation provided insight into my research question regarding the way students from different cultural backgrounds resolve differences. The activity enabled:

(i)   very effective dialogic exchanges that involved a great deal of language negotiation as well as reasoning skills,

(ii)   the students to learn something about other cultures,

(iii) the students to discuss the rights granted other cultures in a multicultural Canada,

(iv)   students from an essentialized and often misunderstood religion to present a different perspective, and

(v)   a Canadian student to look at other cultures in a more inclusive and less essentialized way.

On the other hand, I worry about the depth of knowledge that can be gained through these dialogical interactions since there is never enough time to fully explore the issues. For example, my Chinese students' revelations about their atheism shocked their Muslim colleague; however, China has a long religious history that was suppressed during the communist era, a fact that my Chinese students themselves may be unaware of. Is a little insight into other perspectives better than none at all? Or does a superficial understanding lead to misinformation and further stereotyping?

There are no neat and tidy solutions, no indisputable, correct answers that can be "deposited" (Freire, 2007) into passive students; but perhaps this is the essence of a critical pedagogy and a more appropriate conception of knowledge, better suited to our untidy, complex, contradictory postmodern world.

5.1.3 Domestic violence

A critical multicultural pedagogy also needs to challenge behaviours in all cultures that oppress and dominate (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994). In this section, I will describe how this played out in my class.

Below is an extract from an audio-taped interaction I engaged in with the whole class over rights, obligations and values. While the extract below focuses on just a few participants, the discussion actually engaged many of the students. However, I have chosen this section since it exemplifies the way Katy connected the topic to larger oppressive social behaviour:

Wendy: *Parents have the right to spank their children*
Chorus of student voices: *Yes, yes, no, no! Yes, yes! (Lots of noise!)*
Wendy: *Ah, this is a controversial one! How many people agree people have the right to spank children?*
Susan: *I disagree with spanking a child because people don't know how much to use and sometimes they overdo. They damage, maybe the face.*

Wendy: *I think that's a good point.*

Colin: *...and some people can have very bad memories from their children.*

Wendy: *I think that's a good point. It may not be harmful physically, but it could be harmful emotionally.*

Many voices: *Yeah!*

Wendy: *...you could feel humiliated.*

Student voices: *Yeah.*

Wendy: *Or maybe it makes you feel that you can settle problems in physical ways*

Voices: *Yeah.*

Colin: *Sometimes it makes the babies feel if they are hit then they can hit.*

Wendy: *Yes, I think it may show you can do the same thing, it's acceptable.*

Alex: *I think it's fine to hit. I think you can beat as you want and there's no problem with that (laughter from the class). Sometimes kids, they drive you crazy and you want them to do something and they don't do it. I think beating at that time is not bad.*

Katy: *That's not good.*

Alex: *I beat sometimes kids. I have a nephew. I slap him and then he listens to me and doesn't do it. (laughter from the class)*

Wendy: *Do you spank him, or do you hit him really hard?*

Alex: *Oh, I hit him really hard.*
(uproarious laughter- can't believe he's admitting to it!)

Wendy: *I think that's not allowed in Canada.*

Students: *Yeah!*

Katy: *I think domestic violence -- because children always see their parents -- If the children are seeing this kind of habit, it will lead to violence.*

Alex: *(interrupting)*

Wendy: *Let her finish.*

Katy: *It's not true we always have to spank them. Yes, sometimes it happens. In East Indian society, this is the most dangerous thing -- like parents use violence at home and it affects their children. That's why many, many East Indians are becoming drug dealers, and using violence...*

Alex: *(Interrupting) No, I think...*

Wendy: *(interrupting Alex). I think Katy has a good point. Any kind of domestic violence is violence.*

Katy: *It is, yeah!*

Wendy: *So if you use violence with your children, they are going to remember that, so if the father then goes and smacks the wife...*

Katy: *Yes!*

Wendy: *...then it's acceptable because your father smacked you. So how do they know the difference? So I think you're saying all violence is wrong.*

Katy: *Parents are role models.*

Wendy: *Yeah, that's a very good point.*

Alex: *...but parents have to. You see kids are kids. Sometimes you can say something fifty times they will not listen if they don't want to. At that*

time there has to be some kind of strictness. You have to do something; you have to take some kind of action.

Wendy: *I don't think I've ever spanked my children. I think it also depends on the children. I shouted at them! (laughter) I shouted at them very loudly sometimes and they stopped and they were scared. And then they would say "Why did you shout at me? Can't you just tell me?" (laughter) And I would say, "but I told you ten times! (laughter) and only now that I'm shouting, you are listening!" My parents also never hit my sister and me. I had two brothers and they were twins, identical, they looked exactly the same. (ooh, aah, murmurs from students) Once my father got really angry with one twin, and he chased them around the house. And they hid under the bed and he pulled one out and he spanked him. And it was the wrong one! (much laughter)…I agree with Katy, spanking sets a bad example.*

(Classroom Dialogue: 09/07)

Katy connected this topic to the broader theme of violence against women, particularly in her own South Asian community. This was a theme that concerned her greatly. In her Weekend Log (See Appendix R: Weekend Log), she wrote about her discussion on gendered violence with a policeman at a community police station where she volunteered. As part of a class assignment she went to a forum on gendered violence organized by a local university in conjunction with local community organizations. She also chose this topic for her final presentation. I include an extract from her conclusion:

From learning all these facts, you can see it's not easy to get out of this kind of relationship… A battered woman has fear. It is hard to handle this kind of situation because a woman is not only getting experience of abuse emotionally, mentally, she also becomes part of the cycle, like a vicious cycle like husband remorse, then abuse, then remorse, and then again abuse. Like keeping playing over and over. Women gradually become isolated from friends and families, and at last they want to keep this relationship for the sake of the kids. And now law enforcement and the courts are finally understanding the devastating effects on the woman, the victims. But the first step have to take the victims, like women have to come forward and report if they have any problems.

(Katy (26): final oral presentation: 4/12/07)

I followed up on this theme in our private interview, asking her if there was a particular reason for choosing the topic of violence against women for her final presentation:

Katy: *Still some people carry those old beliefs. They think like, women (are) just for decoration. Or they have to, like, they have to work outside. Then they have to work inside; they have to do everything. ...I was so surprised because I thought in Canada, like, people's mentality should be changed. Because in India, in our old culture it was really, really, like, it's common. It was really common. Like now, in India, after thousand boys, just eight hundred or something girls... (She then described the recent murders of Indo-Canadian women and a female child that had been extensively reported in the local media.)*

Wendy: *Of course, it's not only violence against women in the Indo-Canadian society. I mean violence against women is in white society as well, and not just people who are uneducated, people who are very educated. ...So do you think those sorts of subjects are important to discuss in class?*

Katy: *I think so! For sure. Because if people discuss -- because if some people even don't know, they do these things at home. They do discriminate with women, but they don't know it's wrong. They think it's okay.*
                    (Katy (26): Interview: 10/03/08)

I had intended to introduce the issue of gendered violence into the course content since it had become a hot issue in the local community in which I usually taught. However, when my teaching assignment was changed to a different campus, I changed my mind. On reflection, it was more significant that Katy had linked the topic of "spanking," a common response to punishment in the daily lives of most of the students, to the patriarchal practices that she said are often normalized in her own community.

Many theorists have pointed out that educators and students should problematize certain oppressive behaviours such as sexism and patriarchy in specific cultures, provided this is done in a dialogical way amongst equals. Avoiding such critiques in the "celebration of diversity" inevitably results in cultural relativism and the perpetuation of social

stratification (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; May, 1999; Moodley,

1995; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994). However, in order not to essentialize and

pathologize this particular culture, I pointed out to Katy that gendered violence cuts across

class and ethnicity (Canagarajah, 2005; Fine et al., 2000). In addition, although I stated my

own views on spanking children, to avoid a self-righteous smugness that can serve to

undermine critical pedagogy (Johnston, 1999, 2003), I also shared with my students some

humorous, personal anecdotes about my own and my family's struggles (and errors) in

disciplining children. My students responded warmly to these stories and I believe they

contributed to a trusting, equal and respectful relationship, which I, similar to Johnston

(2003) believe is one of the most important components of language teaching (p. 149).

Many critical multicultural theorists contend that cultures do not stay the same, but

change on contact with the host culture, merging into a "third space" which contains

characteristics of the previous culture and influences from the new culture (Bhabha, 1990;

Bourdieu, 1991; Kramsch, 1993; May, 1999; Rattansi, 1999). Some theorists go even

further by stating that not everything in every culture is worthy of value and some things

should in fact be left behind because they are incompatible with the values in the new host

culture (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; Moodley, 1995; Parekh, 2006).

However, when contesting oppressive behaviours it is better for this to come from the

culture itself, possibly with outside support.

The Indo-Canadian community itself had taken the initiative in addressing the

problem of gendered violence through public forums and their own media. Katy, who had

come to Canada three years previously for an arranged marriage, described herself as "very,

very traditional." Yet she displayed a strong desire and ability to change some aspects of

her culture, especially the status of women. On the other hand, she emphasized the aspects of her culture she valued and intended to maintain in Canada, such as her religion, respect for the elderly, and strong family ties. In addition, when given the opportunity, she had shown the capability to not only challenge some of the oppressive practices of her own community, but to contest patriarchal opinions within our own classroom, especially those expressed by a male member of her own cultural group.

Kymlicka's (1995, 1998) distinction between external protection and internal restrictions, was useful in order to distinguish between the "hijab" situation (See Chapter 5.1.2), and the above discussion on domestic violence. Kymlicka maintains that a democracy should support cultural practices which ensure the minority group's survival in a dominant culture, such as flexibility in dress codes to accommodate religious beliefs. On the other hand, he rejects internal restrictions which limit the right of group members to question and revise traditional oppressive practices such as the treatment of women and children (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998).

5.1.4 Human rights and the Tibet protests

One of the issues that stressed me the most was the Tibet situation. It erupted at the end of the Spring 2008 semester in my R13 class when one of my students expressed anger over the Western media's portrayal of human rights abuses in China. This remained a hotly contested topic throughout the Summer 2008 semester as protests and criticism of China increased in the weeks leading up to the Beijing Olympics. This issue brought into sharp focus the complexities in CLP – how could I negotiate the tensions between my own values (challenging what I believed to be China's oppressive treatment of the Tibetans) and validating and respecting my students' alternative knowledges and epistemologies?

Since the subject arose spontaneously in the classroom, I had no time to reflect on how I would deal with it or prepare ways of incorporating it into our class discussions. However, I did not want to silence the obvious passionate feelings of anger that the situation had provoked in many of my Chinese students. So I abandoned my planned lesson in favour of a discussion. Since the dialogue became very lively, I let it continue for about an hour.

Below is an extract from this discussion:

Ken: *The Chinese government offered 400 million to develop Tibet every year. But Dalai, as the cultural leader, he did nothing, he did nothing…and now he want to separate Tibet from China, and say Chinese government was a ruthless controller. But we can't see it. Tibet is developed so well. People there are getting rich but Dalai says "They control us, they kill us." That's not true, we all see that not true.*

Tanya: *Why they not democracy?*

Gail, Ken: *Because different culture, different religion.*

Tanya: *So they want an independent country, own country?*

Ken: *Like over 60% of people there are Han ethnic, and Tibet became a part of China since 2,000 years ago.*

Wendy: *Isn't it also that the Tibetans are Buddhist and communist China…*

Ken: *No, the religion is all free,*

Tanya: *No, it's not free! I heard the Christians, they torture and they capture…*

Students: *No, no, no!*

Tanya: *A Korean pastor -- no it's true. Why you -- you have a good point, but listen to me. My church family went to China to spread the religion Christian, but they were captured by the Chinese police. Then they tortured so many times. Then they came to Canada and they said to the church family, there's no free for religion in China.*[22]

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Wendy: *Maybe Tibetans have some grievances against China they want to express, and they're not given the opportunity to express them?*

Tanya: *Yeah, I think their system need some democracy.*

Gail: *Tibet is a very independent religion. And it's free because I went to the province near to Tibet. All the people have strong religions, very strong. Nobody wants to change it because you cannot change it.*

Wendy: *But why are they sending so many Han people into Tibet? Because before the Tibetans were the majority, right, and the Tibetans are saying their culture is*

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[22] The dialogue over religious freedom continued for another 15 lines

being threatened because the Han are being sent into Tibet. So the Tibetans feel their culture is being threatened. Is that true, do you think?

Student: *I think they want to separate from China.*

Gail: *China won't let Tibet separate from China.*

Wendy: *But isn't it important to find out what Tibet wants? Yes, maybe China doesn't want Tibet to separate, but maybe Tibet feels their culture is being threatened. Isn't it at least good to hear what their complaints are?*

Angela: *If Tibet is separated from China, most people will be poor, more poor than now.*

Simon: *...and with the expansion of China, and the technology and what's happening there, Tibet are scared to lost their culture. That's what I can see from here.*

Gail: *Before we discuss this question we have to ask why America want Tibet independence from China and the Chinese government. Why it want to control Tibet? Because the mountain, the high mountain, Himalaya, is very important. Because everybody knows a long time ago British came from Himalaya into China...then came a big war in China, so Tibet is a very important area in Chinese whole country. So Chinese government never want to give up.*

Wendy: *It's very strategic, right?*

Gail: *Yes, the key. But the other country maybe want Tibet independent, out of Chinese control. Then it's easy to do other things.*

Wendy: *I understand that, it's a very good point because the United States does the same thing. Like in Iraq, it wants to safeguard the oil supply. But I have a question. Do you believe that all the news you get from China is correct?*

Ken: *We don't get it from the news. We get it from videos, from the citizens and on the internet. Actually, we are not believe our government as you guys think. (murmurs of yeah, yeah). We are confusing [confused] about everything our government says.*

Wendy: *It's the same for us. The United States can present a situation, but we don't always believe it, so we question it a lot, say the reasons for going into Iraq...*

Ken: *Yeah, we question a lot.*

(Students: Classroom Discussion: 04/08)

After class, I felt unsettled, wondering if I had handled the situation adequately. Did I express my "social justice perspective" strongly enough? Had I supported the "oppressed Tibetans in the face of Chinese aggression?" On the other hand, had this position silenced or marginalized my Chinese students' greater localized understandings? I had to admit to myself, that like most North Americans, I knew very little about the historic relationship between Tibet and China.

The following day I decided to hold a forum in class with students taking on various roles to discuss the following situation:

Recently China has been getting a lot of negative publicity because of its actions in Tibet. The Chinese feel this is very unfair, and think the Canadian media is presenting a biased account of the events in Tibet. A Chinese student, a Tibetan student, a Christian missionary, and a representative of the United Nations explain their views and then come to a group decision regarding the best way to handle the current situation in Tibet.

The following is an extract from the "UN representative," who made the concluding remarks:

Angela: *I think all of you have good points but you know the world won't be end. It's still going on, and I think peace is the most important to human beings of our earth so we don't argue these pictures [in the Press] are fake or real.*
(cell phone rings)
Ken: *It's George Bush (much laughter)*
Angela: *We can known more information about Tibet from different ways. Not only listen to one government, not only listen to the China and the US. We can have more information especially from Chinese people, from Tibet or out of Tibet. Maybe they saw the truth and some of them have already talked to the media, and posted online. And you can read it, and maybe you can have other information or more information about what's happening.*
Wendy: *Good, I think that's good. Just to keep talking about it, right, so you can learn from their perspectives and they can learn from yours, right? You need to keep an open mind and learn from many perspectives.*
(Students: Classroom Discussion: Date 04/08)

The forum was not particularly well-reasoned, but since this topic had emerged in the final weeks of the term, I didn't think there was time for the students to research and prepare their roles more thoroughly. However, in our private interviews, many students from this class told me they had found the discussion very interesting and informative. What surprised me even more was that some of the students had continued the discussion

(in English) after class and even researched the issue further on their own. One student had

even participated in the protests that were organized downtown. This was particularly

impressive since it was the final week of class and just a couple of weeks before their final

exam;

> Barbara: *After that discussion, I did some research about the Tibet issue…because the key problem in Tibet is land…the land, because of the change. And now those rich people [in Tibet], they don't have land so that mean they don't have power right, but those poor people, they have land…*
> Wendy: *I think a lot of Western people feel that people just believe what the Chinese Government is saying, and it is propaganda...*
> Barbara: *I don't believe governments you know, sometimes those information are not reliable because they have their own positions...but we believe part of them, right. Because if we don't believe our government, why should we believe Western government?*
> (Barbara (20) interview: 19/06/08)

Another student explained:

> Gail: *I thought maybe that West world -- how you say -- old opinion for Chinese government. It's not good because maybe Chinese government has many mistakes. Maybe it's not perfect. But still change and maybe to better because you know China is a huge country with many, many people. It's not so easy to run a big country. And also China has over 5,000 years history. It's a long, long history for a country so I think West world has wrong impression for Chinese government.*
> Wendy: *Did our class discussion make you change your mind in any way?*
> Gail: *When I was in China I just hear the news, and I see the newspaper and got information from one side. But now I can stand in the middle and see the both sides and listen to the different sides. That was very good because I can see difference.*
> (Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)

My French-Canadian student also said he had learnt a lot from the discussion:

> *I didn't really want to offend Ken. He very strongly believes that the Chinese view is. I just give a little opinion. Just made a similarity with my own culture -- from an outside view. And Ken was right to say that maybe I'm changing the reality. It's interesting to know what's -- what's going on in the point of view of other people who are from this place.*
> (Simon (24): Interview: 19/06/08)

While nothing was resolved, the discussion enabled both the Chinese and non-Chinese students *and* me to gain a more nuanced understanding of the situation, which resulted in many of us shifting our positions to embrace alternative perspectives. Simon, the only Canadian student, even acknowledged that perhaps the Western media "was changing the reality" and that it was important to know the views of people who "are from this place." The Chinese students' comments also revealed a skepticism of their own government's opinions and a desire to seek out alternative knowledge through modern technology, such as cell phone photographs and internet postings. This contradicts the commonly held stereotype of the Chinese student uncritically accepting their government propaganda. However, as Barbara astutely pointed out, if they questioned their own government, why should they unquestioningly accept Western media propaganda?

Since the problems escalated as the Beijing Olympics drew nearer, I used a similar role play in my Summer R14 class but gave the students more time to research and prepare for their role.

Should the Chinese government allow peaceful protests at the Beijing Olympics next week? Participants: Chinese official, athlete who supports peaceful protests, Chinese athlete who is against the protests.

With the research and greater preparation, the role play was more sophisticated and thoughtful than the forum in the previous semester.

> Marge: *In my opinion they should be allowed to have a peaceful protest because it's everybody's right to have a protest and express themselves. According Amnesty International webpage…Amnesty International is an organization who always trying to find the truth no matter what and they always base their beliefs to help people who is depressed [oppressed/repressed] or have problems, political problems. So I just checked their website and their website says Chinese government is repressing people for telling what's happening to the world. They even*

targeting the internet and stop people from sending messages to tell what's happening. Even people who are trying to find the truth, they don't allow them to write down exactly what is happening there. I believe this is the time for Tibetan people to tell the truth because it is the perfect time for them to express what is really happening in China.

Betty: *...I don't agree with that. I want everyone to know the Chinese government hope that they can hold a good and successful Olympic Games. As we all know, there is a lot of bad news about China. We need to think why the protesters do this thing at this time, in this year. What is their really purpose? At this time the Chinese government just want to protect the all-over-the-world people when they are in China. So we need to separate issues about political and Olympic games.*[23]

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Emily: *Now Beijing is under the eyeballs of the whole world. They don't want anything happen at this time…. It can happen if they allow everyone to come into the city, anything can happen so they have to give a limit to the protest, so they have to keep the city under the control so it looks stable and safe for everyone to visit.*[24]

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Emily: *As you said, the protests have been going for many months, so if the government is doing something wrong, it's not necessary to focus on this time of the year. They can do it afterwards. They can even do it on the National Day. But they are really putting the Chinese government on the hotspot…making them frightened because if any bad thing happens, the government has to take responsibility. They can't say I allowed you to do whatever you want, but I take all of the responsibility. That's not fair.*[25]

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Marge: *I understand your point, but as we discussed before, we agree to disagree because I believe they should be allowed to have peaceful protests without restrictions. And Betty and Emily agree they should have restrictions for the protest. So at this point we want you (the class) to tell us what you think because we can't come to any solution because we have different opinions.*

(Classroom Discussions: Summer, 2008)

Since I did not follow up with private interviews with these students, I cannot gauge

the effects of this discussion on the students. However, this activity supported Goldstein's

(2004) claim that role plays enable students to discuss contentious issues in a safe place, and

enable participants to consider different perspectives without personalizing them too much.

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[23] Twenty-two lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

[24] Thirteen lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

[25] Ten lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

In fact, Marge, who played the role of the supporter of peaceful protests, began with a statement assuring her classmates that she did not want to offend anyone, and reminding them it was "just a role play."

The performance was also successful from a language point of view. The students, especially Betty, who had one of the lowest language proficiencies in the class, showed a relatively high degree of sophistication in explaining their points of view, possibly due to the fact that they had a lot of investment in the activity (Norton-Peirce, 1995a; Norton, 2000).

I also participated in the discussion at the end, supporting Brandes and Kelly's (2001) claim that a teacher can't be neutral.

> Wendy: *The reason I think there should be free protests is the more you restrict it, the more people are going to want it. If you just accept that's part of the Olympics then the protests actually lose their importance. But the more you focus on repressing it, the more people are going to want it, right? But it's not just the Chinese Olympic Games that have protests; every Olympic Games has protests. Maybe at the 2010 Olympics they're going to protest about the Downtown Eastside...the homeless.*
> (Classroom Discussions: Summer, 2008)

However, by giving the students the opportunity to express their opinions, I believe I was respectful of their situated knowledge as well.

As a final follow-up to the Tibet/human rights debate, R14's final listening exam was entitled "The Distorted Mirror," an adaptation of a short talk on the bias in the North American media. The talk ends with these words:

> *The media is a powerful influence on our lives, attitudes and knowledge. When it presents only one view of events, it gives us a distorted image of reality. It is up to us to restore the balance by seeking out alternative sources of information.*
> (See Appendix S: Final Listening Exam: The Distorted Mirror)

The dialogical exchanges and role plays regarding the Tibet protests encouraged both the students and me to reflect on and moderate our "commonsense" assumptions and positionalities.

In many of our previous in-class discussions, homework and class assignments as well as in their private interviews, my Chinese students were very aware of the problems in their own country, openly criticizing China's lack of freedom and democracy. However, they strongly resisted the West's criticism over the Tibet situation which they viewed as biased and often simplistic. This supports critical multicultural theorists claims that criticism should be initiated by the culture itself (Parekh, 2006). On the other hand, the students were more likely to recognize the overt sovereign power of their state, and less likely to identify the more subtle ideological hegemony, the way institutions such as the media, are able to engineer consensus (Gramsci, 1975).

But Western perceptions were no different, since most Westerners reacted to the display of overt control in China and its apparent absence in the West, overlooking the way our Western media also "manipulates citizens to adopt oppressive meanings" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 283). Indeed, in much of our local press in the weeks preceding and during the Beijing Olympics, there was an almost unanimous and homogenous anti-China discourse, with little or no reflection of the West's complicity in human rights abuses, especially those related to cheap labour. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) explain that we are all limited by our exposure to competing definitions of the sociopolitical world – in each of our domains the power relations are "legitimated by their depiction as natural and inevitable" (p. 283).

It is therefore not surprising that ESL students resent their culture being vilified by the Western media or by their teachers who themselves often embrace uncritical responses (Lee, 2007). And since most ESL teachers do not have a deep knowledge or understanding of the sociopolitical complexities of other cultures, they should engage in discussions with their students from other cultures in order to access at least some of this knowledge (Knight, Smith & Sachs in Ball, 1990). As one student explained: "China's 5,000 year-old history makes it difficult for Westerns to fully understand."

On the other hand, avoiding discussions on such topics in order not to offend cultural sensibilities is also patronizing and essentializing since it positions students as passive, uncritical and incapable of distinguishing between cultural belonging and government (May, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Sleeter, 1995; Taylor, 1994).

Through engagement in critical dialogues and role plays, my students and I were thus able "to see the world through each other's eyes without losing sight of [ourselves]" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 231). By listening to and learning from my students' positionalities, I was able to also articulate my own situated position, one that I adjusted as I gained more knowledge from dialoguing with them. At the same time, my students were given ample opportunity to vent their frustrations with how they were being represented in the West; in addition, they were exposed to other perspectives, through the classroom discussions as well as through their own research. The focal point of the discussions shifted from a right/wrong, West/East binary regarding the situation in Tibet, to a more nuanced and complex understanding of how our knowledge is manipulated by governments and the media. In addition, the final reading exam article, "The Distorted Mirror" emphasized the importance of seeking out multiple perspectives.

This exemplifies May's (1999) description of the interrelationship between "rooting" and "shifting" where students and teachers are rooted in their own "habitus," but shift in order engage in dialogical exchange with those who have different identities. As Kramsch (1993) explains, the goal of such a dialogical exchange is not to offer any certainties or resolve any conflicts but "a paradoxical irreducible confrontation that may change one in the process" (p. 231). For me and some of my students, this resulted in deeper and more balanced understandings.

5.1.5 Discrimination

In class and in private interviews, many students talked about discrimination that they had experienced. Rather than overt racism, this discrimination took the form of a subtle distancing (Moodley, 1995), a rudeness and impatience especially with the lack of language ability. Duff (2002) also noticed in her study of a Canadian classroom that local native speakers, from minority and majority cultures, had successfully assimilated the normative behaviours of the Western liberal classroom, so were able to monopolize the teacher in lengthy discussions. The following dialogue illustrates a similar kind of marginalization that my ESL student experienced in her regular university course:

Barbara: *As immigrants, we are very sensitive to those, those stuff…I'm taking a psychology class, yeah because most of my classmates are native speakers, we can't speak English well, and during the class we have to expand some point, in English, but because as ESL students, our English is not that good, we cannot explain ourselves perfectly, and, not all of our classmates, some of them, they laugh at us…always I just keep silent. I think they will laugh at me, yeah. Yeah, because sometimes like ESL students, we cannot pronounce our words correctly.*[26]

....

Barbara: *Yeah, and now sometimes I don't want to go to psychology class.*
(Barbara (20): Interview: 09/06/08)

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[26] Twenty lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Barbara's experience would probably not be recognized as overt racism or discrimination, especially since the class was undoubtedly multicultural, with many students from the same ethnic background as herself. However, it is an example of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991). Although an A student in her psychology class, as a new immigrant and ESL student, Barbara did not have the requisite cultural and linguistic capital of the other students. As Levinson and Holland (1996) point out, this often results in non-elite students self-silencing in the company of those with presumed greater social standing.

Some of the most popular problem-posing issues connected to the students' experiences of unfairness in their everyday lives. One example involved a Chinese immigrant who was involved in a car accident and felt she had been discriminated against (See Appendix T: Problem-posing: Car Accident). I adapted it from Morgan's (1998) *The ESL Classroom: Teaching, critical practice and community development*. The participants included Linda, the Chinese driver played by Molly; John, the other driver played by Mathew; a policeman played by Bev; and an insurance company representative played by Claire.

The following is an extract from their performance:

Ins. Rep: *In my opinion, I suggest you should go to see the police officer again and ask for your file or ask them to start a report.*
Linda: *You mean the police was supposed to ask me about information and he was actually discriminized [discriminated against] me?*
Ins. Rep: *Actually, I'm not sure if it was discrimination. But in your case if you want to get it covered by the insurance company, we have to have some evidence of witnesses to support your case.*
Linda: *So what should I do next time?*
Ins. Rep: *If it happens next time remember to have witnesses, eye witnesses and get all the information like evidence like taking a picture of the car accident like how it looks like and remember to tell us…like within seven days.*
Linda*:   Ok, thank you. I will go to the police station now….*

(To the policeman) *I feel really bad. I feel like you were treating me like some kind of foreigner who doesn't know how to speak English. And I didn't feel like you respect me enough.*[27]

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

In the following section, the students continued the role play, integrating some useful advice for the class, should they find themselves in a similar situation.

Linda: *So our group came to a decision that I should go to the police station and ask them to retake my statement. And I want them, or if they didn't say sorry to me, or I still feel unjusted, I can still go to the court and make...make…*

Wendy: *A complaint.*

Linda: *Yeah. A complaint*

Police officer: *And in my point of view, I didn't give John's statement. I didn't. I only listening to one side. But according to the people I spoke with, it's unnecessary to give a statement if that person admit he's 100% to blame. So that's why I didn't. However, I should listening to Linda; otherwise she will feel bad.*

Ins. Rep: *As the insurance company representative, the only thing I can do for her is ask her for those evidence to support her case. If she get in court about arguing who's fault, who's right, then I can use those things to bring in the court and fight for it and get her insurance. But about the discrimination stuff, the insurance company won't take care of it.*

Bev, who played the part of the police officer, identified with Linda's feelings of humiliation because of the police officer's treatment of her.

Bev: *I think I understand her feeling because I'm still an immigrant and people think "Oh you don't speak English." People might try to do something behind your back but sometimes it's not like that. [To class]: What will you do if you are in this situation? If you drive a car and someone hits you, what you gonna do?*

The conversation continued with other students asking for advice and discussing similar situations they or their friends had encountered.

Marge: *Well in my case if I were Linda, I just go straight to the police and say what is the reason you don't want to hear my statement? I want to find out in that moment, and don't let things go.*

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[27] Ten lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Wendy: *Yeah, that's good. But I think if you don't have the English, you don't feel confident, you just accept "Oh, you're a foreigner; you don't have good English. You're an immigrant. This is a policeman."…. You accept what he says, and then you go to the insurance …and find you don't have the right information.*

Delia: *So I will take someone's name, and also the policeman's name.*

Wendy: *Those are really good points, Delia. You look for someone and say, "Can I take your name and address and phone number in case I need you?" And what else did you say – the policeman's name. Yeah, he can't refuse to give you his name. Those are really good points.*

Betty: *My friend had a car accident so she just took picture and called the police. She can't speak English very well. So she called the insurance company. They speak English very well and Chinese, so very helpful. You can call your agent, the insurance agent.*

Wendy: *Ok, ok. Right at the time when you have the crash…*

Betty: *…and write the car license number.*

Wendy: *Yes, yes. And take a picture; that's a really good idea! With your cell phone?*

Betty: *Yeah, with cell phone.*

Wendy: *The situation with car accidents happens all the time when you don't know all the rules, so the suggestions you've given are very good. And Claire, did you phone an insurance company to find out your information?*

Claire: *I just looked on the internet. It has the policy, and what is covered, and what isn't covered. And if you want cover, you must report within seven days to the insurance company. And they require some evidence, so when they go to the court they can have evidence.*

Wendy: *And I think you made a good point in that the discrimination is not the insurance company's problem. Not that it's not important, but they're not the place to report. But you still can take it further. I think you said that, Molly, you can take it to the court or to a human rights, or to a community organization that helps immigrants. That's always a good place to go, to a community organization that helps immigrants.*

(Classroom Discussion: Summer 2008)

In their interviews, many students mentioned that this activity had been very useful because they had also been involved in car accidents and felt they had been unfairly treated because of their lack of English. They said this situation helped them to understand "the real life" and they would have a better understanding of what to do should they be involved in a similar situation again. For example, Barbara, the student who had told me about her own feelings of being discriminated against because of her low language proficiency, said:

...those situations are related to our life. Like the car incidence -- car accidents. The lady cannot speak English well and so maybe some unfair stuff happened. Because in real life, like most immigrants, we cannot speak English, we cannot handle the situation some times.
(Barbara (20): Interview: 19/06/08)

Another student told me how important it was for her to know what her rights were in

Canada, so she could avoid being manipulated.

Susan: *You know, Wendy, you know, I think this is a good topic for everyone to learn English. Because mostly students like our classmates we talk about this situation a lot.... About discrimination or they don't feel fair...that is so good. Next time when we go out and we have this kind of situation how can we talk? What is right for us to talk? I think more people will like that and learn a lot. I think me, I should know every right I have. I don't want to be blind. I don't want to be manipulated so I need to know what is the rights for me. Before in China Chairman Mao, he is -- what is that word? He is a communist but like the people all think the same thing, he is a -- conformist. So that they made you conform everything so he could take advantage over people.*
(Susan: Student Interview: 30/01/08)

My students' personal stories of discrimination and their positive reactions to the

above problem-posing activity, made me realize the need to incorporate even more such

situations in future classes. In this way, a critical language curriculum is always fluid and

dynamic; it should respond not only to student needs and rights, and to current events, but

also to the pedagogue's own ongoing awareness, learning and reflections.

The most vocal complaint of systemic racism in Canadian society regarded the lack

of recognition of international qualifications and career experience which relegated

immigrants to low-status and low-paying jobs. Two students, both holding post-graduate

diplomas, discussed their frustrations with me.

I saw many doctors, even doctors, they are working in gas stations. They are working full time to support themselves...so it's hard for them.... And even if they apply for work, like sometimes I don't know -- employers they do discrimination! Because they want Canadian experience, they look for Canadian education... I remember when I came to Canada and I applied to [a fast food restaurant]. And I

went to work my first day and now they told me "Wash dishes". And when I came home I start crying, "Oh my God, I'm not gonna -- That's my feeling.
(Katy (26): Interview: 10/03/08)

For me I always think that it's like starting over. Like you've never done anything in your life, so you have to start like from Grade 1. It's really difficult for me. I think they should try to accept diplomas from other countries. Because we can't start over. It's really difficult… You just don't want to do some little job for someone…. [My brother-in-law] always says that there are much better opportunities in white people's country,[but] when I think about it sometimes I say it's better to stay in our country because you leave everything, who you are, you work in an office -- and you leave everything, and then you came here. (gives a huge sigh)
(Sonya (26) Interview: 26/06/08)

This type of systemic racism exemplifies the ways new immigrants from groups who suffered historic racism can also be excluded from the job market through restrictions on qualifications and extensive retraining requirements. Since systemic discrimination is difficult for disempowered ESL students to contest, I think a pedagogue needs to advocate for his or her students' by whatever means are available (Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Kubota, 2004; McLaren & Torres, 1999). Their stories validated my earlier decision to contest the educational and career barriers experienced by foreign-trained professionals (See Chapter 3.1.2).

5.1.6 Challenging discrimination

Finally, I asked my students if our discussions and activities in the class had helped them in their own lives, especially in challenging any unfair situations. Many students said it was important for them to know what was acceptable in their new environment, an attitude that would confirm Modood's (2001) contention that immigrants desire to understand more clearly what is socially and politically acceptable.

Gail explained:

> *I think I understand Canadian society think deeply than before. Because during our discuss we got more information and we did lots of research, web pages, newspapers and books. So different information come from a different place. We got more sense for Canadian society. Important [if] you live in a new society ...because I got experience from class and I got different information...so I can speak out with Canadian and say I agree with you or disagree with you and why.... In the real life in my experience I used English to challenge a bus driver.*

She went on to explain that she thought the bus driver had been rude in demanding to see her ID whereas it had been sufficient for other passengers to simply present their monthly passes.

Gail: *I said: "Why? Why I need to show my student ID? I don't want to show you." [The bus driver said:] "If you don't want to show me, I don't want to drive." I was so surprised. I think she's rude. Why me? And so, I think some discrimination. I asked her for her work number. I said I will complain you. I said: "If you don't want drive, go ahead, lots of people on the bus." So she gave up and drive me home. But I think it kind of discrimination.*
Wendy: *So do you think the discussions in class helped you to challenge her?*
Gail: *Yes. I have confident to argue with other people. Even I'm a student, an ESL student and she is a Caucasian lady, good at English, but I have the confidence because I have rights.*
(Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)

5.1.7 Implications

In summary, it would seem from the responses in private interviews as well as from the audio-taped classroom activities that many students did relate their classroom experiences and the problem-posing activities that we engaged in, to the outside world, an important element of CLP. But a critical pedagogy calls for not only recognizing power disparities between the macro- and micro-structures of the students' everyday lives, but also challenging them. So what were the implications of my findings for my research questions:

1. Do students show agency and transformation by challenging inequalities, traditional assumptions, the teacher's opinions, and the status quo?

2. How do students and I from diverse cultural, political and economic systems resolve differences on controversial topics?

For some students these dialogues around situations relevant to their lives, helped them understand Canadian society and other cultural values better, which they felt was important and necessary for an immigrant in Canada (See Chapter 5.1.2 Hijab situation). Even if they were not prepared to change their own attitudes, they believed they needed to know what Canadian society's expectations were. On the other hand, although Simon, the only Canadian in the class, didn't shift his attitude considerably, he felt that the cultural discussions and interactions had broadened his perspectives. However, I still questioned whether these necessarily limited dialogical exchanges might lead instead to misinformation and essentializing rather than a deeper knowledge of the complexities of other cultures.

For some students the dialogical interactions did cause them to reflect on and even contest some of the normalized, oppressive behaviours in their own cultures (See Chapter 5.1.3 Domestic violence). On the other hand, they also vociferously challenged the unfair way the Chinese were positioned in the Western media (See Chapter 5.1.4 Human rights and Tibet). One student felt that the class had contributed to her increased confidence in challenging unfair or discriminatory practices in Canadian society (See Chapter 5.1.5 Discrimination). This was not only because they had acquired more linguistic proficiency, but also because through the class discussions, dialogues and other activities, they were more aware of their rights.

The Tibet/China situation brought home to me the underlying tension between teaching a social justice agenda (advocating for the rights of the Tibetans) and respecting the knowledge and experiences that my Chinese students brought into the class. However,

through intense dialogue, discussion and role plays, (some of) my students and I emerged with a more nuanced and complex understanding of the Tibetan issue from the other's perspective. The focus shifted from a discussion of who was right or wrong into a more profound understanding of the way consensus is engineered by the media and governments in all cultures.

The situation around the theme of bullying resulted in an unintended consequence since a student interpreted it as emphasizing North American individualism rather than contesting homophobia and bullying. However, this outcome served to remind me of the complexities around engagement with the critical and the necessity to contextualize.

The data from these problem-posing situations and my interviews revealed that students were very much engaged in these dialogical activities because they recognized them as relevant to their lives. Moreover, they believed these situations could help them more effectively negotiate Canadian society. The data also contradicted the common Western assumption of the passive, uncritical ESL student since my students often displayed high-functioning reasoning skills as well as the ability to critique both their own and Western governments. This is illustrated by Ken's remarks, supported by murmurs of agreement from his colleagues, "Actually, we are not believe our government as you guys think …. Yeah, we question a lot" and by Barbara's question " ...if we don't believe our government, why should we believe Western government?"

An analysis of the data also shows a great deal of sophisticated language learning was taking place within these dialogical activities. This had important implications for my question whether a critical language pedagogy better meets the socio-cultural *and* academic needs of my English language learners. The following section continues this theme.

5.2 Linguistic issues: "It make my English so good!"

Some scholars have suggested that CLP may not be suitable for low-level students because understanding and discussing complex sociopolitical matters requires a high language proficiency (Moorthy, 2006). Although many of my students expressed frustration with not having sufficient language to fully express themselves, most felt it was not a significant barrier since it forced them to find alternative ways to communicate their ideas. Moreover, many students said that the sociopolitical topics and dialogical activities had increased their motivation to learn English because they dealt with real life topics that they could use in their own lives.

One student (who had one of the lowest proficiency levels in the class) explained:

> *Yeah, I really love this topic. Not one way to study. From this topic we learn English but more like maybe -- what can I say, it is like society. Maybe -- how can I say -- it is not only English. The interesting [topic] this make me learn more English. It make my English so good. Not only speak to other people how many relatives I have. I want other people know my country and know my opinion. And the government, are they right?*
> (Susan (36): Interview: 30/01/08)

Another student had this to say:

> *You know, I like our class because, maybe, I don't know, but this class is very special, and I never have this experience you give us, your topic is special. It's like your topics are from the public, and then, you give us the opportunity to -- to practice. Like after your class, I can talk more fluently. I don't know why! But, I just consider I find a way to talk just like my native language…I consider that what I need…the real talking…not only speech.*
> (Jill (45): Interview: 18/04/08)

To my surprise, many students reported continuing the dialogues outside of class with their colleagues, friends and families, both in Canada and in their own countries. Some said they spoke their mother tongue, some a mixture of English and their mother tongue, but others said they had spoken, written or researched in English. For example, many students

said they had continued to research China's role in Tibet after class even though the topic

had arisen right before their final exams. The subjects that were most frequently continued

outside of class were the ones not commonly discussed in their home countries – gay rights,

the death penalty, changes in the family, euthanasia, physical punishment and human rights.

Gail explained:

> *I send email to my friend who is my best friend in China. We discuss about the death penalty because she ask me what are you doing. I said I am doing my homework. What topic? I said the death penalty. And she asked what does death penalty mean? Because you know lots of Chinese don't know the words, translation for English and Chinese. So I described to her and her interest in it so we discussed…we didn't finish this topic because I saw she has work to do and no time so it's not finished the topic. But it's a long topic, we spent almost 1 ½ hours or over 2 hours on the internet.*
> (Gail (33): 26/06/08)

Another student explained

> *Some my classmates in China, we can talk in English because we talk on line, MSN, about euthanasia. We typed English because I don't want to change it to Mandarin because if I do some research, I have to use Google, type in English… In China they don't discuss those issues, they just listen to what teacher says and lectures. [And] the same sex marriage, because here it's legal, yeah. But in China it's still most people cannot accept this marriage and it's kind of weird. It's not that common in China… I'm surprised, I was telling them the difference.*
> (Barbara (20): Interview 19/06/08)

In addition, transcribing the in-class dialogues made me realize how much negotiation

of meaning and language learning was actually taking place in these small groups as they

tried to discuss or work out the solutions to the problems. The transcribed dialogue also can

provide the teacher and students with relevant material to use for further language

development and improvement.

It thus seemed to me that rather than being incompatible with CLP, a dialogical

approach, involving problem-posing situations related to the students' own lives, *promoted*

language learning. A great deal of real interaction and negotiation took place in the small

group dialogical exchanges; in addition, many of the topics actually prompted students

(voluntarily) to continue discussing them or finding more information outside of class.

Often this was in English; however, even when it was in the students' own mother tongue, it

still necessitated accurate listening, summarizing, retelling, clarifying concepts and ideas,

and expressing opinions, all high level reasoning skills.

5.3 Empowerment issues: "I hate those face!"

Critical language pedagogy draws on social reproduction theories that demonstrate

how inequalities are reproduced through institutions such as schools. However, theorists

also emphasize that students do not only passively exist within the education system – some

also struggle against, conform, accommodate – in many different ways (Ahearn, 2001;

Apple, 1982, 1999; Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux, 1983; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Nieto,

1999, 2004).

Nevertheless, CLP has a strong consciousness-raising agenda which suggests that the

students are disempowered and the teacher needs therefore to empower them. This has

been criticized by some scholars who believe that teachers are themselves disempowered

(Covaleskie, 1993; Gore, 1992) and that this kind of rhetoric characterizes students as

"weak" and "oppressed" even if they don't see themselves as such.

It has also been criticized for being patronizing, implying that the teacher knows what

empowerment is and how to empower the student (Apple, 1999; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore,

1993; Orner, 1992). Freire strongly condemns the notion of a teacher acting upon students,

but rather sees it as a mutual process (Freire, 2007; hooks, 1994). Moreover, Asian students

are also often constructed as passive, lacking critical thinking skills, so that the

empowerment rhetoric becomes a way to "make them more active," "think for themselves,"

and "enable them to participate in a Western education system" (Lee, 2007; Morgan, 1998; Morita, 2004).

In the following section, I first investigate how my participants fit with these theories and critiques, and secondly, try to determine what, if any, my role was in either constructing them as passive or providing them with opportunities to express themselves as empowered, active and critical. This relates to my research question: "In what ways, if any, do students contest unfairness and inequalities in the classroom, the educational institution and in their everyday lives? Do they show agency by challenging taken-for-granted, conventional perspectives, the teacher's opinions, or the status quo?"

5.3.1 Agency

In one of my homework assignments, I asked my students to keep a weekend log to record what they had done and to whom they had spoken (See Appendix R: Weekend Log). Since many of my students lived in a predominantly Chinese community in Canada, I was concerned that many of them were not maximizing their opportunities to speak English. I hoped this exercise would make them aware of how much time they spent in an English-speaking environment. In addition, I wanted to connect their everyday lives to the classroom by trying to understand what they were using their English for outside the classroom. I hoped this would enable me to construct more useful and relevant classroom activities (See Chapter 4.1). However, this activity also provided me, unintentionally, with a perspective on how they negotiated their lives outside the classroom, to what extent they fit with or challenged the "passive, disempowered stereotype."

Most students wrote about their everyday lives which revolved around shopping, banking, and children's activities. For example, one student told me about her conversation

with her son's chess teacher in which she asked the teacher what he had learned and what he must do to prepare for the upcoming competition. Another student had to advise customers on their lighting needs. Susan, who was renovating her own home, first looked up the technical words, such as tile and cement, that she would need, then she went to a building store where the sales clerk told her how to lay a tiled floor and what tools she should use.

For a native Canadian these may be small inconsequential daily routines, but for ESL students living and studying in a foreign culture, grappling with a foreign language, they indicated a high level of agency, requiring courage and risk-taking skills, challenging themselves with new ways of doing and coping. Yet this passive stereotype pervades the academy; it was reflected in a colleague's request during my Spring 2008 semester, that two counselors put on a seminar to "teach ESL students the higher- end thinking skills that would encourage them to take risks."

This seems ironic since all these students had already taken a huge risk by leaving the familiarity of their own countries to live, work and study in a completely foreign language and culture – a risk unknown to most North Americans (Adam & Moodley, 2005). Auerbach (1993a, 1995) came to a similar conclusion; she criticized traditional "survival" English skills for refugees which she felt was patronizing since they had already survived great hardships.

One student's entry showed how students compensate when the classroom doesn't meet their needs. Susan's classmate had to write a resume since she was looking for a new job, so they went to the library to find a book on how to make a good impression at a job interview. They took notes from the book and also asked the librarian's advice.

Susan also related a shopping trip to a building store at which she bought eight items, but was only charged for seven. She discovered the error when the eighth item was loaded into the car.

She wrote:

> *So she [cashier] let me paid again. Her face show me she had question mark on her head. So I call that guy who help me load the eight items in my car. He give explain to the lady. I hate those face!*
> (Susan (36): Weekend log: 11/07)

By refusing to passively accept the cashier's mistrust of her, evident in the cashier's facial expression, Susan displayed a powerful identity.

When reporting back on a contact assignment, another student, Jill, said she had approached someone at the bus stop and wanted to ask her what her income was, but she had heard this wasn't a polite question in North America.[28] However, Jill showed a lot of initiative by reframing the question: "I asked her if she thought she earned enough money to raise her children." (Jill (45): Contact assignment: 09/07)

What Pennycook (2004) refers to as an "aha, moment!" Not only did she show initiative in reframing the question, she integrated a deeper social aspect into it.

In our private interview Susan related an incident in which a supermarket employee had been rude to her because of her poor English:

> *I don't know which I should do and I'm really nervous. Then I feel really bad. Inside of my heart I want to talk to him and say if you come to China just a few months you cannot talk like me in English that good. But this is a good thing because after I get home I practice my English. Next time I have this kind of situation I'll tell them "Hey, you need to pay attention!"*
> (Susan (36): Interview: 30/01/08)

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[28] I had avoided teaching this section on polite/impolite questions, thinking it was too steeped in Western values. However, having Jill ask a complete stranger what her income was, made me realize the necessity of at least sensitizing students to such topics since the stranger could have been offended and responded rudely to Jill.

What was interesting in this incident was that rather than feel deflated and depressed by the incident, it had stimulated her to learn more English in order to cope better the next time. She explained further:

> *When I talk to people just like this kind of situation happen I feel bad, I go home to find the words I want to learn to speak, like discrimination, then I make a sentence. Then I go out to talk to them. And now, I practice more because this kind of things happen more and I practice more. Now I go out to speak to some people and I'm not very nervous.*

She then related another incident in her sister's apartment when she was given a ticket for parking her bicycle outside the apartment, but the neighbour, a policeman, was not. When she complained to the manager, he was very rude to her, so Susan told her sister they should go to a higher official downtown:

> Susan: *I said I help her. You need to stand up for yourself…. The guy is a really higher position. Another guy is sitting there and we talk about this situation. I said, "Today we come for he to apologize to us. We think that is not comfortable to talk to me like that. Don't you think we are not Caucasian? I think maybe you are discriminating."*
> Wendy: *You said that to him?*
> Susan: *Yeah.*
> Wendy: *What did he say?*
> Susan: *He apologize…finally he apologized. He said, he apologize…and my sister really happy.*

She relates yet another experience about returning a defective item to a store and asking for a refund. Despite the fact that they both spoke Cantonese, she insisted on speaking English, and had practised the dialogue at home beforehand:

> *…and I ask him again "Who are you?" I said "Where is the manager? Are you the manager?" He said no. I realized! I said "Why you not tell me before you talk to me? You waste my time! You waste my time!" I practiced at home, just like that.*
>   (Susan (36): Interview: 30/01/08)

These examples illustrate the multiple and complex ways students exhibited agency – they negotiated, accommodated, adapted, resisted and challenged the situations in which

they found themselves (Ahearn, 2001). Moreover, these examples, all of which happened *outside* the classroom, show that a lot of education takes place outside of schools (Weiss, 1996), supporting Ellsworth's (1992) contention that educators are not solely responsible for, or solely able to, raise the critical consciousness of their students. This is an important observation since it rejects the patronizing assumption that criticality and resistance exist only within the pedagogy of critical educators.

However, we should not assume that all or even most students are as empowered as the ones quoted above since this would be similarly essentializing. As critical teachers we need to be sensitive to the many different ways students may want to respond to unfairness since speaking out is not always beneficial or empowering (Ellsworth, 1992; Orner, 1992; Stein, 2004). Rather we need a more multifaceted reading of CLP that acknowledges the many different identities students bring into the classroom and the many different contexts in which they act. Kerry clearly articulated this position in our private interview when I asked her if she would contest unfair treatment towards her son:

> Kerry: *(Long pause.) No, I will -- I will think it over. If my son said the teacher treated him unfairly, I will think that it's a whole semester. If I say no to the instructor or to the principal, maybe something serious will happen to my son, maybe it will influence him. Maybe I will keep silence. It really depends what the teacher's character. If he/she is friendly to me, maybe I will say something. If she don't want to hear, maybe I will keep silence, even he was treated unfairly. If it's very, very serious I will go to the principal.*
> (Kerry, (37): Interview: 24/01/08)

In the classroom, many students demonstrated high levels of critical thinking in their problem-posing activities. This puzzled me since many students had told me how rigid and uncritical their education system was. I asked one of the students how they had made the transition so easily:

I'm so glad to study here and think about I don't have to follow the teacher…because there is different system. I'm so glad to try new one and I like this one. Because you know, in China, students always follow teachers and follow books. [In China] you've got perfect essay, but your opinion the teacher thinks is wrong…. You get zero because it's your opinion. In China teachers require students have same opinion… Do you remember I mentioned my husband want to try the different learning system. So we got some information [that said] you can discuss with your teacher and make the argument with your teacher. So before I attended here I think that maybe I can try and maybe it's true or not, but after attending class, teachers always tell us you can make different point and say your opinion. Yes. So I make [the transition] quickly. (laughs)
(Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)

This leads me to support Shin and Crookes' (2005) findings that Asian students exhibit active critical engagement where conditions are safe, flexible and conducive to critical discussion. With the right pedagogy that taps into these abilities, it would seem to me that all students have the potential to reason, critique and participate actively. A CLP, with its dialogical problem-posing approach, facilitated but not dominated by the teacher, has a lot of potential to unleash these possibilities.

5.3.2 The teacher's role

Negotiating my role as the teacher proved quite challenging. Freire (2007) contends that imposing knowledge on passive recipients would relegate the educational process to a "banking" system. Morgan (1998) and Kumashiro (2004) explain that what teacher's teach *unintentionally* can be as important as what they teach *intentionally*. In her study Lee (2007), discovered that some teachers' responses silenced their students, thus reproducing relationships of inequality. On the other hand, Crookes and Lehner (1998) said that some of their teacher trainees criticized them for not intervening more in discussions.

In Chapter 3, I aligned myself with Brandes and Kelly's (2001) preferred teacher position of "inclusive, situated engagement." But how does such a position actually play out in the classroom? I struggled to walk that fine line between *inspiring* my students, but

not *imposing* on them. In order to understand my role a little better, I carefully reviewed the

audio-taped classroom dialogues – I found that my participation varied greatly. Sometimes,

I intervened in the discussions quite a lot, at other times, hardly at all; sometimes it was

simply to facilitate the discussions, clarify, and elicit further responses; sometimes my

students asked my opinions directly, at other times, they focused entirely on dialoguing

within their small groups. However, it's important to note, that my positionality came

through in the materials and the activities I chose, whether or not I verbally participated in

the dialogues. I also asked my students in our private interviews if it was important for

them to know my opinion and if they had been influenced by it.

Most students said they did not feel they had to agree with me. One student was

almost apologetic, asking "Do you mind if I'm against you?" (laughs) (Ken (22): Interview:

11/06/08)

Nevertheless, most students thought it was important to hear my opinion because I

represented another perspective, the Canadian viewpoint; however, they did not seem

dominated by my opinion, influenced by it only if it was reasonable. Dawn's viewpoint

below mirrored many of the other students:

> *If the teacher can show us some evidence and if it sounds reasonable, like the*
> *physical punishment, I changed my mind. I think it is important to know teacher's*
> *opinion because you come from a different culture, with different background*
> *knowledge and we want to listen to people who come from a different place. So*
> *we want to know their opinions.*
> (Dawn (19): Interview: 04/02/08)

 Simon described how he saw my teaching approach:

> *You always give the first step. It's like you did the first step. You give us the*
> *opportunity to think about something. A first thought and after that we can keep*
> *going. Build on this first thought. I think you have to participate too. You don't*
> *influence me, but it's good that you participate like us…because we are like a*

group. Yes, you are the teacher, but you give your opinion too, many time. Like us. So you are a teacher but you're part of the group too so we have that.
Simon (24): Interview: 19/06/08

I include the following extract from a transcript of an in-class discussion about rights

which showed how the students and I interacted and challenged each other's opinions:

Wendy: *Do people have the right to burn their national flag? (A lot of unintelligible responses from the students).*

Wendy: *How many agree? (no answer) I think I agree that you have the right to burn the national flag. (murmurs) I think if your country is doing something really bad, why can't you burn the national flag? (Everyone talks at once.)*

Brenda: *Well, in our country…*

Wendy: *Just hang on, Katy's trying to say something.*

Alex: *Well, you …*

Wendy: *Just wait, Alex….*

Katy: *I don't think so. Because it's about the people, about our leaders, so we have to burn their photos or we have to make dummies and burn them, not the flag.*

Wendy: *Ok, that's a good point. So you're saying if you criticize your country you can criticize the leaders, the government but not the country, so the flag is a symbol of the land, not the government.*

Students: *Yeah, yeah!*

Wendy: *Well, I think you persuaded me.*

Student: *In China if you burn the flag in public you will be arrest. (much unintelligible response)*

Alex: *Almost every country is like that.*

Brenda: *In my country they burn America's flag. (much noise, laughter, reaction)*

Alex: *Yeah, America's flag you can burn any time you want! (more noise, laughter, reaction)*

Wendy: *Yes, that's interesting. Because there's this hatred of America?[29]*

Brenda: *And you have the rights to do that…*

Wendy: *But you don't have the right to burn your own flag!*

Alex: *No, we don't either. (more laughter, noise, response)*

Wendy: *So I think Katy has a good point. You can criticize the government, but we can't burn the flag. So do you agree or disagree that people have the right to burn their flag?*

Student: *All disagree!*

Wendy: *Sixteen disagree. But then you should not have the right to burn other people's flags! (laughter)*
(Classroom Discussion: 09/07)

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[29] This was in the final year (2008) of George Bush's presidency when respect for the USA was very low.

It would seem from my data that students wanted to hear my opinion, and appreciated the fact that I gave my opinion "as one of the group," but they didn't just unreflectively absorb my opinions – they were influenced by some of my opinions, especially if they thought the information and arguments were reasonable and persuasive, as with the discussion over the death penalty. One student's tentative inquiry whether I minded if he disagreed with me seemed to imply two things: firstly, he understood the traditional role of teacher as primary authority in his own culture, but he had the confidence to challenge such a position in our classroom.

This would support some scholars' contention that we underestimate students' agency and overestimate the teacher's power to influence and control (Benesch, 2001; Olesen, 2000). Moreover, I would argue that the assumption that teachers' unreflective responses necessarily silence students and reproduce relationships of inequality, in fact essentializes and stereotypes ESL students as passive; in addition, this assumption ignores the multiple powerful identities they can access outside the classroom (Duff, 2002; Norton-Peirce, 1995a; Norton, 2000).

On the other hand, I recall two occasions when my responses probably did silence or shame my students. The first was when my students had to tell a 5-minute personal story. Melanie talked about a birthday party at which the dog ate the birthday cake. The following week, she returned to the same house for dinner. After commenting on how delicious the meat was, the host told her it was the dog that had eaten the birthday cake the previous week.

I was caught off-guard by the story and exclaimed in dismay. The other students immediately rallied in defense of Melanie, assuring me it was not the pet dog while Melanie

blushed in embarrassment. On the second occasion, I reacted quite sharply at a student's

homophobic response, telling him that he would be charged with discrimination if he

behaved in that way in Canada. He replied: "You asked for my opinion, so I'm just telling

you."

These incidents made me reflect on the hypocrisy of encouraging students to voice

their stories and opinions, only to shut them down when they contradict our own values. On

the other hand, CLP rejects deferring to students, but rather encourages the pedagogue to

engage and challenge overtly oppressive attitudes. The following example shows how I

attempted to challenge some extreme homophobic comments of students engaged in a

problem-posing situation.

A son tells his parents he's gay. They accept him and say they still love him and he

can remain in the home while attending college. What values does this attitude

show? How would you react in the same situation?

Betty: *If he stayed at home I'd make him change, not allow him to continue like that.*
Wendy: *But I don't think it's something you can change in a person. I've had guest*
          speakers in the class who are gay, and they say they cannot change.
Philip: *I heard of a situation where they separated the men and didn't give them food.*
Wendy: *But that's torture. You can't do that.*
Philip: *Yes, and after a few months, they changed.*
Wendy: *Well if I wasn't given food, I would also agree to do anything. That's torture,*
          that's not really changing.
Gary: *Yes, I think if you can separate the men for some years, then they will stop*
          loving each other.
Wendy: *Well, maybe they won't love the same person after being separated but it*
          doesn't mean they will stop loving people of the same sex. Maybe they will
          forget about their former lover but that won't make them change the fact that
          they want to love someone of the same sex.
                    (Classroom Discussion: 08/08)

As I seemed to be making little headway in this discussion, I felt it would be more

appropriate and effective to follow up, by inviting a speaker from PrideSpeak to talk to my

class. She was a young Asian lesbian who had previously attended this same university, but had dropped out due to depression and isolation because of her sexual orientation. She gave them a lot of information around language usage, problematizing words such as "faggot" and "normal;" in addition, she provided them with some of the current research on sexual orientation as well as very personal stories of the challenges she had faced.

Although I did not follow up with private interviews in this class, I did have them fill out anonymous and optional evaluations of the workshop (See Appendix U: Evaluation: Guest Speaker from Youth PrideSpeak). Most were very impressed and moved by the speaker. One student said she had talked about it to her homestay family and they had gone together to watch the Gay Pride Parade. On the other hand, there was one blatantly homophobic response and a few students didn't fill out the evaluation at all. However, there is a limit to our ability to raise consciences and as criticalists we have to be prepared to accept our fallibilities and acknowledge that changing views without indoctrinating people takes time (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Pennycook, 2001).

Indeed, many students told me that their opinions were formed from many sources; the information and knowledge they got from the class, their past background knowledge and cultural experiences, and family influences. When change occurred, it usually happened gradually over time. As Pat explained, "It's -- every day and you don't -- you don't feel it but it goes through your brain, your mind -- gradual" (Interview: 04/03/08).

When students were discussing problems in small groups, I often acted as facilitator, answering their questions, clarifying information, helping them choose the right word or phrase and giving them feedback on their language skills. When they couldn't come to an

agreement, they often asked my opinion directly, as in the following situation regarding

plagiarism.

Ken: *Wendy? (much laughter)   Wendy, what do you do if you get two absolutely the same homework? If I ask Barbara the homework, I'm going to hand in the same stuffs, what you gonna do?*

Wendy: *Well, ok let's talk about your performance and then I'll tell you my opinion. You need to develop your arguments a little bit more, speak a little bit more, I think Ken did a good job in that…*

Ken: *Thank you*

Wendy: *…but he tended to dominate (laughter) so you need to be, you women need to be stronger to challenge him, ok? You used some good phrases, Adele and Barbara. For example, you said "…excuse me, I don't agree with you." Be careful not to put your hand over your mouth Adele and speak a little louder. Barbara rephrased what she heard. That's a good thing because it shows she's listening and making sure she understands.[30]*

………………………………………………………………………………………

Wendy: *In my opinion the professor was expecting too much to think students working on a problem for homework are not going to share the answers… I think if the professor wanted to make that homework assignment for 10%, that's a lot of the marks, he should have had it as an in-class assignment.*

(Classroom Discussion: 03/08)

In the dialogical interactions, I also tried to incorporate my own personal stories

which served both to decenter my authorial role, as well as present my opinion in an

accessible way. This can be seen in the following discussion about whether doctors have an

obligation to tell their patients the truth:

Barbara: *If a patient gets cancer, I think he or she has the right to decide how to spend the rest of her life.*

Ken: *Sorry for interrupting, but I have a different opinion. If the doctor tells him "You have cancer, you will die," he may give up.*

Tanya: *But they need time to -- what's it? [prepare for] end of their life. They need time, so they have will for their children.*

Ken: *I think the family members should be told about the patients' illness, but the patient, no.*

Tanya: *No, that is the doctor's responsibility for the patient.*

Liz: *…depends if he was negative personality, or positive.*

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[30] Ten lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Voices: *Right it depends on his personality[31]*

....

Wendy: *In fact in Canada, the doctor has an obligation to tell the truth. That's the law in Canada. And you don't know how it's going to affect the patients until you tell them. My sister, for example, had terminal cancer. She wanted to know the truth from the very beginning and she didn't give up hope, never, never. She had four children and she used that time to write letters to her children, so sometimes it's very important to give them the opportunity to prepare their children. Otherwise, it's a shock for the children.*

(Classroom Discussion: 03/08)

From these dialogical interactions, it seems to me that my students felt comfortable disagreeing with me, but were also interested in knowing my opinion and were even prepared to change their minds if they felt I had offered valid reasons. Moreover, one of my strategies in decentering my power as the teacher in the classroom was to participate in sharing personal, sometimes painful stories. In addition, I was responding to criticisms by some feminist scholars that, in encouraging "voice," we (researchers and teachers) expose the vulnerability of our students while protecting our own (Behar, 2003; Orner, 1992).

5.3.3 Dominant students

In my R11 class, I was strongly criticized by three female students for not controlling one of the male students who tended to dominate classroom dialogue. In my diary I had noted my concern over this student for monopolizing discussions. I also checked back on the audio-taped group discussions and noted that I had intervened a number of times, requiring him to give other students a chance to talk.

Nevertheless, he continued to dominate the discussions, sometimes even asking the other students for their opinions, but still interrupting before they had finished as exemplified by the following two extracts:

Wendy: *(to Alex) Are you making sure everyone has a turn?*

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[31] Eight lines of text were omitted after this point in the dialogue

Alex: *I am actually (everyone laughs)*
Wendy: *Are you asking their opinion?*
Alex: *Yes, I am. When they stop, then I start talking*
Kerry: *If I try to say something… (laughs)*
Alex: *Please say something. We need your opinion. This is very important to us. (Kerry laughs a lot!)*
Voice: *I think all of us agree…*
Alex: *Is there anything you want to add into …*
Kerry: *I try to add…*
                 (Classroom Discussion: 10/07)

I asked the three female students if they remembered our discussion on group roles, and how they should deal with a member who was dominating the group. One said she had tried to stop him, another that she had done the same, but then felt very sorry because it had embarrassed him. The third said she was too shy to do so. All felt it was my responsibility to control him and they didn't want to challenge him too much out of respect for me because it was my classroom.

On the other hand, a number of the young males remarked on how they appreciated having him in their group because he pushed them to talk:

> *But if Alex in our group, then maybe we are discussing because he always talks a lot, a lot. Because when he was talking about these things, he will push you to talk more. So in every group, should be a person who wants to talk and then the person will push you, the other members to talk.*
>   (Hilton (20): Interview: 12/02/08)

I wondered if it was gendered dominance, with the females unwilling to challenge the male, but in my R13 class, the dominant male was often challenged by the females in the class which led to some lively dialoguing. In my R14 class, a female tended to dominate. While the dominant students in R11 and R14 were two of the most fluent and acculturated students, the dominant male in R13 was not; however, he was passionate and enthusiastic.

Although research has focused on the ways teachers can silence students (Lee, 2007), a dominant student can also inhibit other students and prevent them from exploring and

developing their own arguments. This can be seen in the following extract in which the

dominant student completely shuts down the suggestions of another student who was on the

right track, but was never given a chance to complete her explanation.

 Car accident scenario:

Trish:	*...so she need to collect evidence to prove she didn't...*
Katy:	*...no, not evidence...*
Trish:	*...and she need a witness.*
Katy:	*Witness? No, she doesn't need any witness. The fault is the policeman, definitely, because that's his duty.*
Pat:	*He's out of his duty. So now is the solution, what should she do?*
Trish:	*...(trying to speak)*
Katy:	*She should go to police station.*
Pat:	*She has rights.*
Katy:	*Oh, yeah, she has rights.*
Trish:	*I think maybe the other driver told the policeman something, so he trusted him.*
Katy:	*(interrupting) I...*
Trish:	*...but why...*
Katy:	*He, just maybe he...*
Trish:	*...The other driver maybe give money or something...*
Katy:	*It's not a corruption case...*
Pat:	*No, I think what I mean is just now they (insurance company) have an obligation to refuse to pay money to Linda...*
Katy:	*No, no...*
Pat:	*(trying to finish) ...because without a statement...*
Trish:	*...she can't prove...*
Katy:	*No, no, no.*
Trish:	*She can't prove Linda's fault or not fault. She need the evidence to prove.*

                        (Classroom Discussion: 12/07)

    There is no blueprint for teachers to follow in this regard as Crookes and Lehner

(1998) also discovered – it is yet another of the challenges in a dialogical classroom. On

reflection, I think an effective way of addressing this problem would have been to return the

transcriptions to the group for students to work on together. This would have alerted the

dominant ones to the ways they were inhibiting the rest of the group. This would be far

more empowering for all the students than if I had assumed an authoritarian role, and taken all the responsibility for keeping the dominant students in check.

5.3.4 Summary and implications

In this section, the data connected to the following research questions:

- Are student identities subordinate to the more powerful identity of the Western liberal pedagogue?

- Do students show agency in contesting power disparities and if so, how?

My data reveals the multiple ways my students exhibited agency – negotiating their way in a foreign language and culture; finding ways to compensate when the classroom didn't provide them with what they needed; and challenging discriminatory behaviour.

I have also drawn attention to the ways my students negotiated meaning and solved problems in dialogical interactions that reflect high level linguistic and reasoning skills. These behaviours contradict the notion of the passive, uncritical ESL student, dependent on the critical pedagogue and pedagogy for enlightenment and empowerment.

I have also discussed my role as the critical teacher in a CLP classroom. While my students desired and appreciated my dialogical participation and believed it was important to know my opinion, they did not seem to unreflectively absorb my opinion or be dominated by my more powerful identity as a teacher. I attribute this also to the fact that they are more empowered and agentive than some theorists have previously acknowledged.

Finally, I describe some of the difficulties I encountered – sometimes I unintentionally embarrassed a couple of students; I was probably unsuccessful in challenging the homophobic attitudes of some students; and I probably didn't deal adequately with some of the dominant students.

But this speaks to the crucial importance for reflexivity in critical language pedagogy. The pedagogue needs to constantly reflect on his or her own practice, to look at what has worked and what hasn't. This investigation has provided me with the opportunity to do just that, and I will be able to build what I have learnt about myself and my practice into future classes. Yet even this is no guarantee of future success since a new context will bring forth new issues. But this is the nature of teaching and particularly critical language teaching, where there are no hard and fast rules or easy one-size fits all answers.

5.4 From rhetoric to transformation: The Philosopher's Teahouse

Critical scholars emphasize that it is not enough for students to understand "limit-situations," that is, situations that oppress or inhibit their life opportunities; a crucial element in critical language pedagogy is that through a dialogical interaction, students and teacher find a way to transform their lives into more liberated ones (Apple, 2002; Benesch, 2001; Freire, 2007; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 2001).

However, many scholars have expressed concern that such a grand revolutionary stance could result in negative outcomes:

- endanger students

- result in unintended outcomes which the teacher has no control over

- be impractical given the language teacher's own lack of power within the system

- lead to a paralysis of action or hopelessness

- be impossible to effect within the context of a 14-week language program

To counter these criticisms, many scholars have called instead for small steps of change, favouring reform over revolution (Benesch, 1991; Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 2004; Vandrick, 1995). Through private interviews, students' written class and homework,

and audio-taped in-class discussions, I hoped to determine if any of our critical work – class materials, interviews with guest speakers, my own views, group discussions, contact assignments and dialogical interactions – had led to changes.

In my R14 class a number of students had expressed very direct homophobic views. In order to address this discrimination, I had the class work in small groups on the problem-posing activity related to bullying and homophobia (See Appendix V: Problem-posing: Bullying). I have included one group's dialogue in some detail because it provides an excellent example of the way these students negotiated meaning amongst themselves. Moreover, it shows how the reasoned arguments of two group members actually resulted in one student shifting his original homophobic position.

Elaine: *How about we talk about the perspective from the different persons, then we'll go on to discuss the solution.*

Paul: *It's just my personal opinion. If he's gay and people are mocking him, the best way is the school has to ban him from the school. Ban, kick out, I mean.*

Elaine: *Ban who, the gay?*

Paul: *Yes.*

Elaine: *Why?*

Paul: *Because some people really hate gays because they are so different and sometimes people think gay is just disgusting.*

Elaine: *I'm sorry I don't agree. They are still persons, right. Even disabilities, they are different but still we have to respect people's differences.*

Paul: *Yes, that is true but sometimes one people can mess up thousand people. So I think in social aspects the school has to ban him.*

Marge: *I understand your point. I don't agree either. It's like us here. We're from different countries…right,…so how we feel if Canadians say we don't want you in our country because you're not Canadian, you're Indian or Chinese. So I think even we don't like gay people, if we want respect we give respect. He has the right to be there. Everybody has the right to be there.*

Paul: *Yes, that is true but I think the best way is just kick him from the school. It's just my personal opinion.*

Marge: *Now they say here: "What is the school's rights and obligations to him?" So what should the school do to help with this problem? It says "Think about the situation from the perspective of the school, the student and his classmates." So he [Paul]talks about the classmates,*

how they may feel. But how would you feel if they treat you like that, right? You would feel sad, depressed, horrible because you know the people doesn't want you, doesn't like you. So it's not a good thing to feel that way.

Paul: *I think one solution is the school has to send him to a school for gays, the gay school. Does that exist?*

Marge: *No!*

Paul: *I think it is the best way, a school for gays.*

Elaine: *I don't agree. I think education, like a lecture, to say why some people are tending to same sex or why some people are born gay or why some people...or maybe ask a person to talk about her personal things, opinions. Maybe people will gradually accept these students.*

Marge: *Now the next question is: "What are the possible ways the school might deal with the situation?"*

Paul: *I said the school has to ban him.*

Elaine: *Maybe lecture to help people know more and more about gays.*

Marge: *I agree with her. Like people have to be educated because I know many people don't like gays. OK, if you don't like them, but what is not ok is to be mean. Because everybody have the right to be in any place because it's a free country so I think the school should have the [obligation] to protect this person, and educate people to understand and respect him.*

Paul: *Yes, I partially agree with your opinion, but… if teachers spend lots of money for education to everyone about gays, maybe some people can't understand and maybe some people can't agree that. So...*

Marge: *That's what you think and I understand your point. But the thing is, if you go to school to learn, and that's what you said and it's true, you don't have the right to make fun of someone because of the way he looks or the way he is. So if people, students, go to school to learn, that's what they should be doing instead of mocking people….*

Paul: *Yes. So your main point is we have to respect people if they're gay or not, right?*

Marge: *Yes… So I think the school [should] explain. And if the students are still bothering him, they need certain punishments for not following the rules.*

Paul: *Yes, I agree. Your opinion is better than mine. Actually, yes.*

(Classroom Discussion: Summer, 2008)

There is no way to determine if his attitudes and behaviour might change in the long term for as Benesch (1991) contends, changes take many forms and may not be immediate or immediately recognizable, but rather gradual, cumulative, and abstract, especially changes in attitude, which may take years. However, moving from a stubbornly

homophobic position to agreeing that his colleagues' arguments were more reasonable and persuasive than his own represents a significant shift. In addition, one of the most convincing arguments that Marge makes is in linking discrimination against immigrants to discrimination against homosexuals, thus capturing Rattansi's (1999) concept of a multiplicity of racisms which articulate with other forms of identity, discrimination and inequality.

One of the most surprising outcomes of the class was discovering that not only did students struggle against some entrenched, traditional oppressive attitudes and perspectives, many also engaged friends and family, both in Canada and China. Sometimes, in the course of these discussions, not only did they change their own minds, but also those of their friends and families. The topics that initiated the most dialogue and reflection were the death penalty, gay rights, homelessness, human rights and physical punishment.

In our discussions on the death penalty, students listened to two talks, one supporting capital punishment and one against. They also surveyed the public which exposed them to a wide variety of different opinions and they prepared a cooperative debate on the topic. Thus, in formulating an opinion on this issue, they had many different sources to draw from.

Although many students strongly upheld the death penalty,[32] the following quotations from student's private interviews reflect how some of their views had shifted by the end of the course. Their comments also indicate that although they were prepared to disagree with me (See Chapter 5.3.2), they were also open to changing their opinions if presented with substantive reasons:

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[32] This was not surprising since China has the highest number of capital punishments in the world, according to Amnesty International, 2009

Maybe I should think about these things, because I [was] in favour of death penalty. But, because of your points I thought: "Ahhh, I should, I never think about that before...that maybe he was innocent and we hang him..."
(Katy (26): Interview: 10/03/08)

I was thinking about the death penalty and I did some research and because before I thought umh, if there was -- if there a death penalty, then maybe the crime rate will be declined, but that is wrong. Yeah, so if it doesn't reduce it, maybe we should find a better way to reduce it.
(Barbara: (20): Interview: 09/06/08)

I support death penalty before 100%... Personally right now I think maybe it's not so correct to do death penalty...because if people who take somebody's life, it's not a right way to take their life again. I think life sentence, it's a good way to make, to give a chance to somebody make a change – rehabilitate... Also, I talk with my husband and my sister. I interviewed my sister's supervisor in the mall. The lady came from India, I think and she didn't accept my opinion [supporting the death penalty] because I didn't change my opinion before our class discussed. So we talked about maybe half hour. We battled to each other, all in English, because common language.
(Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)

Homelessness was another issue where students' attitudes shifted. Initially, most students believed that homeless people were just lazy and didn't want to work, but after listening to short personal vignettes about homeless people, many indicated they had a greater appreciation of the many different reasons for homelessness. For example:

But when I listened to [the tape] about the other people talking about themselves, it is different. Like because of their family you know, I remember one boy, he said his family bullied him. Some of them may be forced to change to homeless like a fisherman, there are no more fish to fish. Before I think all homeless are just lazy to work.
(Hilton (20): Interview: 12/02/08)

When students' changed their opinions, they often wanted to also influence their friends and families as Dawn discusses below:

Dawn: *I think I discussed all, most all the topics with my roommate [from] China. We discussed marriage, freedom and different cultures...we discussed it and I changed her mind about marriage. She will be a single woman and me too.*
Wendy: *[Laughing]. Neither of you want to get married now? Why?*

> Dawn: *In our country we have to. But now we know women have a right if they have money and can work for themselves, they don't need to have a husband.*

While there was no intention on my part to contribute to China's already burgeoning bachelor class, the "bare branches"[33], it was satisfying to see that our classroom pedagogy had inspired at least one young woman to consider future alternative life possibilities.

> Dawn: *Yeah, also [homosexuality] is very bad in China. It is prohibited in China. But after we discuss the topic I think everyone has their choice. You don't need to do it but you accept it. I changed her [roommate] mind about physical punishment, homosexual and also... marriage.*
> Wendy: *Ok, so what made you change your mind?*
> Dawn: *Reading [about] it and discussing it and also watching movie and news. I watched the CBC news every day. They talk about human rights and freedom and now I can accept the opinions because we talked about it in class. Also, classmates from other classes, we talked about human rights in Canada and China. We think we don't have enough human rights in my country. We can't say some bad words about our leaders in public places. On the website, if you type the leaders name it won't appear. I think this is unfair. Because in Canada you can express what you want and you don't go to jail. In China it is very different....I talk about gays rights with my friends in my country on MSN. I told them about gay, homosexual is not illegal and we should respect people. But they didn't change their mind. They cannot accept it.*
> (Dawn: (19): Interview: 4/02/08)

It was very surprising to me that many students not only contested some taken-for-granted oppressive practices in their own cultures, they also talked about many of the topics we had discussed in class (the death penalty, gay rights, human rights) and tried to conscientize their friends and families both in Canada and in their homelands!

One student went even further by sharing with me her plans to run a teahouse along the same lines as our classroom.

> Gail: *So I want to run a tea house by my own. Don't follow the leader. Don't listen to others.   Just by myself.   It comes from your class, you know…because I found it very interesting, have some discussion for one topic. Maybe so funny, and you can make different friends, and you can*

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[33] The number of unmarried men in China is predicted to be 30 million by 2020. (National Geographic, May, 2008, p. 54)

> *take different personalities who has different opinions. It's so interesting….Yes, it is my dream! (laughs)*
> Wendy: *Can you explain how that came from my class?*
> Gail: *I think I like our topics and it's close to our lives and useful and also our classmates, I think all talkative. Talk, talk, talk. Argue! (laughs) …but some teacher is not encourage the student to talk too much.*
> Wendy: *So you want to have a teahouse that you…*
> Gail: *…and a tea ceremony. I think maybe one week pick one topic. Your class gave me that idea. Yes!*

And then she gave it a personal twist …

> *And we can vote the best person who is discuss the topic is almost perfect. Is very good. We can vote for one and set up maybe one can of tea for a gift.*
> (Gail (33): Interview: 26/06/08)

While these examples may show attitudinal shifts, they are not insignificant given the sociopolitical context and education system from which most of these students come. Many students described a system that allowed no discussion, debate, or deviation from the norm.

> *In China we are very -- because of the very famous Cultural Revolution we don't pay more attention to the political affairs. We seldom or never go to the street or strongly support, we never do that and also the government don't allow us to do that and from our heart we don't want to support or against….Because we only have one party, communist party, so we don't have freedom to express our ideas and we are used to that.*
> (Kerry: (37): Interview: (24/01/08)

Gail expressed it more succinctly: "[In China], you have to follow [the teacher]. One truth…one way" (Interview: 26/06/08)

The fact that some of my students were able to challenge discriminatory practices in Canada as well as limitations in their own lives that have been normalized by their own societies, supports the notion that while "habitus" is the result of early socialization, there is potential for change especially in response to new experiences and changing external conditions (Bourdieu, 1991; May, 1999).

Thus in investigating my students responses to a critical language pedagogy, my data reveals that some students were able to develop a critical consciousness, which led to

transformative actions which could improve their future opportunities and possibly those of others. As many theorists have observed, it is difficult to know where these changes will lead, but they do represent important first steps in re-imagining a world less conditioned by inequality, indifference and intolerance (Benesch, 1991; Canagarajah, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: Pennycook, 2004; Vandrick, 1995).

CHAPTER 6

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: NEGOTIATION, AGENCY, AND TRANSFORMATION

In my concluding chapter, I revisit my research questions, and connect the data to these questions. I re-examine the significance of my study and show how it has contributed to research in the field of critical language pedagogy. I also discuss the implications for future research. Finally, I explain what I see as limitations of the study and how I addressed some of the limitations.

6.1 Revisiting the research questions

In this dissertation, I wanted to investigate how my students and I respond to, understand, experience and problematize the key characteristics of CLP, namely:

1. Negotiating the curriculum together

2. Drawing content from students' own lives and experiences

3. Developing, with the teacher's guidance, a critical consciousness, that is an understanding of the ways their everyday lives are connected to sociopolitical structures

4. Converting this understanding into actions to change aspects of their lives in order to improve their future opportunities

However, in such a diverse, multicultural setting, I needed to also address the following questions:

1. Are students' conceptions of social justice, fairness, and equality different from those of the critical multicultural pedagogue who has usually been socialized within a Western democratic tradition?

2. Are students indirectly pressured to conform to the "hidden" curriculum, that is, to a Eurocentric liberal vision of society and the more powerful identities of the teacher?

3. In what ways, if any, do students show agency by challenging traditional assumptions, the teacher's opinions, or the status quo?

4. How do students from diverse cultural, political and economic systems resolve difficulties and differences on controversial sociopolitical topics?

Arising from these questions was my overarching concern: Is a critical language pedagogy an effective approach to teaching ESL, an approach that enables students to access a wide variety of powerful identities as well as improve their practical linguistic skills?

6.2 Responding to my research questions

One of the most troubling aspects of implementing a critical language pedagogy in a multicultural class was trying to respect and validate all the cultural values and behaviours that my students, from a variety of different cultures, brought into the classroom *and* integrate a critical agenda, which has itself been critiqued for being tied too closely to Western notions of social justice.

I tried to do this by drawing on critical social theories, critical multicultural theories and critical postmodernism. With my students, we conceptualized a vision of social justice that I believe was compatible with critical social theories. In addition, I drew on post-colonialism and postmodernism to problematize Western democracy by exposing the West's racist and colonialist past and its lingering legacy of discrimination and disadvantage. In this way I was able to critique my own positionality as a pedagogue socialized in a Western democratic tradition.

In order to avoid cultural relativism, and exoticising difference, I also drew on critical multicultural theories as a way of making "connections to those egalitarian impulses of modernity that contribute to emancipatory democracy" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 295). These theories encourage (under the right conditions) a critique of oppressive impulses in minority cultures; in addition, they emphasize the dynamic and fluid nature of cultures that are capable of shifting and changing, and finally, they call for a critique of *all* cultures, including our own (Bourdieu, 1991; May, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006). By bringing together these different critical perspectives I was able to theorize a critical agenda that embraced alternative ways of looking at the world.

Three dialogical situations in particular illustrated the above theoretical reconciliation:

First, an Indo-Canadian student identified and challenged both the normalized patriarchal violence within her community and a fellow student from her own culture who openly expressed and supported corporal punishment for children. She also, however, described herself as "very traditional," strongly upholding her culture's family values and religious beliefs. In this way, she exemplified May's (1999) description of "rooting" (in traditional culture) and "shifting" (to accommodate modern social justice imperatives), inhabiting Bhabha's (1990) "third" space. Moreover, since Katy herself initiated criticism of some practices within her own culture, her actions supported theorists claim that contesting oppressive behaviours should take place in dialogue with equals and come from within the culture itself (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; May, 1999; Parekh, 2006; Rattansi, 1999; Taylor, 1994). Kramsch (1993) describes how this "third place" or "sphere of interculturality" arises: "From the clash between the familiar meanings of the native culture

and the unexpected meanings of the target culture, meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized" (p. 238).

The second situation revolved around the rights of a student to wear a hijab in gym class. All the students agreed that it was an inviolable right in a multicultural country such as Canada. However, there was also much discussion around the need to accommodate and respect both the demands of the student's religion and the practicalities of the gym class.

These two situations exemplify Kymlicka's (1995) distinction between internal restrictions and external protection. The former is sometimes used to prevent internal dissent and maintain patriarchal behaviours such as domestic violence, which typically results in the oppression of women, and, according to Kymlicka is undemocratic. The latter is used to protect the group from decisions imposed by the dominant culture which could undermine the minority group and threaten its survival in a dominant culture. Examples of the latter are accommodating religious attire and certain customs, and is compatible with a democratic, pluralistic society.

The third situation arose spontaneously from my Chinese students' anger and frustration with the way China was positioned in the Western media regarding their treatment of Tibetans prior to the Beijing Olympics in Summer 2008. This incident forced me to confront my own bias, grounded in Western liberal rhetoric, which denounced Chinese imperialism in favour of the oppressed Tibetans. By challenging both my views and the Western media, my students revealed a high degree of agency and empowerment. Through intense dialogic discussions, role plays and a forum, I provided space for the students to present their particular knowledges and perspectives of the situation. While not necessarily shifting our views, (some of) my students and I emerged with a more nuanced

understanding of the complexities of the situation. More importantly, the bias in both Western and other media was emphasized and critiqued.

None of the problem-posing situations discussed above resulted in clear-cut, definitive "answers," which scholars insist should not be the objective since intercultural contact and communications are fraught with complexities, ambiguities and conflict (Kramsch, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; May, 1999; Parekh, 2006; Rattansi, 1999; Taylor, 1994). Instead, I constructed language activities that focused on open and ongoing dialogue and discussion among equals that enabled participants "to step into outsider's shoes… to identify and explore the boundary and to explore oneself in the process" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 231).

I initially struggled with the concept of co-constructing the curriculum with the students for two main reasons: time constraints and students' educational background in more authoritarian and prescriptive systems. Indeed, one student described his feelings of "aimlessness" in the seemingly unstructured North American academic environment. Consequently, I decided on a curriculum that provided students with enough structure and framework, yet also allowed for a lot of flexibility in order to respond to current sociopolitical issues as well as to issues students brought into the classroom. I integrated practical linguistic and academic skills into the critical content to provide students with the necessary capital for academic success and social access. The vast majority of students responded positively to the curriculum for the following reasons:

- it was drawn from "the real life"

- they could learn more about Canadian culture and societal expectations

- they could talk about personal things that were meaningful in their own lives

- they could learn more about their rights and how to stand up for those rights and

- they could discuss issues that were not talked about in their own countries

By moderating this element of CLP to my specific context, I also validated my own position as an experienced ESL teacher and PhD candidate (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005).

Through our problem-posing situations, role plays, dialogical interactions, research assignments, listening activities and contact assignments, many students related their microcosmic classroom experiences to the outside macrostructures. This helped them understand Canadian society better, which they felt was important and necessary for an immigrant. Even if they did not change their own attitudes, they believed they needed to know what Canadian society's expectations were, thus supporting Modood's (2001) contention that immigrants desire to know the rules and expectations of the host country. Activities that illustrated this included knowing your rights when involved in a car accident, academic expectations regarding plagiarism, and Canadian attitudes towards social issues such as gay rights, the homeless, spanking children and capital punishment.

My findings indicate that my students possessed multifaceted, agentive subjectivities which contradicts the passive, uncritical stereotype of ESL students which persists in the academy (Lee, 2007; Morita, 2004; Shin, 2006; Shin & Crookes, 2005). Within the classroom, they negotiated meaning and solved problems in many dialogical interactions that reflect high level linguistic and reasoning skills. In the outside world, they negotiated their way in a foreign language and culture; they found ways to compensate when the classroom didn't provide them with what they needed, and they sometimes challenged discriminatory behavior.

I have also discussed my role as the critical teacher in a CLP classroom. While my students desired and appreciated my dialogical participation and believed it was important to know my opinion, they did not seem to unreflectively absorb my opinion or be dominated by my more powerful identity as a teacher. Since many of my students described their former education system as one of conformity and obedience, I concluded that such a regime does not necessarily destroy critical skills, but rather suppresses them. Thus I do not believe that I *empowered* my students; instead, the critical classroom provided opportunities for my students to express their powerful potentials.

I also described some of the difficulties I encountered in my role as critical pedagogue, trying to find the right balance between teacher and equal participant, trying to inspire but not impose. This became particularly problematic in dealing with a very dominant student. Three female students strongly criticized me for not intervening more to control the student yet another male student described how his presence in groups stimulated discussion. I concluded that this speaks to the crucial importance of reflexivity in critical language pedagogy since there is no blueprint for "how to do things." Nor should there be, given the multiplicity of contexts, participants, and other constantly shifting variables in critical language teaching – complex, imperfect, contradictory and dynamic!

One of the most surprising findings for me was that the classroom topics and interactions prompted students to voluntarily continue to discuss and research them outside of class. This was particularly true regarding topics that were not usually discussed in their home countries, such as gay rights, the death penalty and single women, as well as subjects that ignited passionate feelings, such as the Tibet situation. Often these discussions were in English; however, even when it was in the students' mother tongue, it still necessitated

accurate listening, summarizing, retelling, clarifying concepts and ideas, and expressing opinions, all high level reasoning skills. Thus it seemed to me that a dialogical approach, involving problem-posing situations related to the students' own lives, *promoted* innovative, engaged and relevant language learning.

For some students the dialogical interactions caused them to reflect on and even contest some of the unquestioned, oppressive behaviours in their own cultures. Even more surprising to me was to learn that a number of students had tried to conscientize their friends and family both in Canada and their own countries. For example, some students tried to encourage their family and friends, both in Canada and their home countries, to reflect on alternatives to the death penalty and to respect gay rights. On the other hand, they also vociferously challenged the unfair way the Chinese were positioned in the Western media. Some also felt that the class had contributed to their increased confidence in challenging unfair or discriminatory practices in Canadian society. This was not only because they had acquired more linguistic proficiency, but also because through the class discussions, dialogues and other activities, they became more aware of their rights.

To sum up, through problem-posing activities and dialogical interactions, my students were able to identify and challenge hegemonic situations in their everyday lives in Canada; in addition, they were able to reflect on and (sometimes) even reject (some of) their internalized traditional cultural practices, thereby claiming and asserting new self-determined identities.

Finally, one student claimed the course had inspired her to set up and run a teahouse when she returns to China along the same lines as our classroom – a kind of Philosopher's Café, where old and new ideas could be presented, debated and dialogued in an atmosphere

of friendship, laughter and mutual respect. Given the conformity of ideas and lack of freedom of speech in contemporary China, this was indeed a radical idea!

And so I have chosen the *Philosopher's Teahouse* as a metaphor for my classroom. Like the traditional Philosopher's Café, it became a place where my students negotiated meanings through dialogue; a place that enabled their agentive qualities and their multiple subjectivities; a place where they reflected on the burning issues of the day, and challenged normalized oppressive practices.

But the metaphor also contains another meaning – the transformation of our classroom into a "third space" (Bhabha, 1990) or " sphere of interculturality" (Kramsch, 1993), bringing together the image of the European *Café,* a place for free philosophical debate and dialogue, and blending it (to draw on another tea analogy) with multicultural perspectives, reflected in the Asian *Teahouse*. And, indeed, my student added her own particular cultural touch by proposing a prize (a canister of tea) for the best debater! Thus our critical classroom became a place which offered students the opportunity to see the world through other eyes without losing sight of themselves; to create meaning rather than consume information and to (possibly) change themselves in the process.

6.3 Significance of the study

In the following sections I outline how my research has contributed to theory, research and socially informed practice in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

6.3.1 Lessons from a critical language classroom

Much has been written about the need for a critical language pedagogy since language and power are interconnected and TESOL is fraught with power differentials (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; A. Luke, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook,

1995, 2001; Tollefson, 1995). However, to date there have been few studies that show how such a pedagogy is operationalized in the everyday workings of the language classroom. My study offers one of the few such in-depth case studies, describing and analysing the challenges, practicalities and effectiveness of such an approach. My study highlights some of the skills necessary to implement a critical pedagogy. These include the ability to adapt spontaneously to situations outside the classroom and to students' needs. It also requires an ability to bring out and respect students' situated knowledge and experiences, and to build on what students bring into the classroom. These skills were exemplified when I abandoned my planned lesson in favour of discussions and activities that allowed students to express their own opinions and knowledge, seek new information, and reflect on the Tibet/China situation.

My research also alerts other criticalists to the pitfalls of a critical approach. One of the challenges is to find a balance between teaching practical academic skills and responding to the demands of the pedagogy for the "critical." In my own classroom, I was constantly looking for ways to embed practical academic skills into the critical agenda. An example of this was when I used the talk by a member of PrideSpeak as an opportunity to practice note-taking skills.

Another challenge is to be aware of unintended consequences. Sometimes in our eagerness to offer new perspectives and empower our students, we cannot always know what the consequences will be. Susan's response to the bullying situation (See Chapter 5.1.1), could have negatively impacted the young boys upon whom she wanted to impress the North American ideals of courage and individualism rather than inclusivity. Not only

had she misinterpreted the situation, she had decontextualised it by applying it to a circumstance which involved much younger children.

My study also reveals my constant concern not to impose but to inspire. A critical pedagogy should open up opportunities for dialogue and discussion, not indoctrinate students with North America liberal ideals. My way of avoiding such proselytizing was to decenter my power as much as possible by facilitating, but not dominating, the dialogical exchanges and by revealing my own vulnerability through shared personal stories and anecdotes. In addition, I offered a critique of Western society, by introducing my students to some of Western society's oppressive behaviours, both historically and in the present.

I also worried that time constraints precluded in-depth discussion of cultural differences and complex social issues. I wondered if this would result in superficial knowledge which could reinforce stereotypes or result in misinformation. While this remained an ongoing concern, after analyzing my data, I realized that some students *were* able to make connections between even limited classroom information and sociopolitical macrostructures. Two examples illustrated this: Firstly, Susan explained how she had originally dismissed her Tibetan friend's complaint of abuse by the Chinese government until she saw *Where the Spirit Lives,* which exposes the abuse of First Nations children in residential schools. The film and our discussions caused her to reconsider the possible truth of her Tibetan friend's story. She was thus able to connect the government-sanctioned abuse of aboriginal people in Canada to the possibility of similar oppression by her own government. Similarly, Dawn explained how she had watched CBC TV news on alleged Chinese human rights abuse, but it wasn't until our classroom discussions about human rights and social justice that she was able to understand and process this media information.

Some scholars have deliberately reacted against prescriptive instructions for the implementation of critical pedagogy, arguing that there is no precise formula because it is context-dependent (Auerbach, 1995; Canagarajah, 2005; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 2001). Others, however, have encouraged such endeavours, considering it a necessity in guiding teachers in what could otherwise remain an abstract and utopian pedagogical ideal (Benesch, 2001; Gore, 1993). As a scholar entering the research field after a career spent predominantly in the practical classroom arena, I believe this study offers a unique perspective, one which I hope can reconcile these two positions above. On the one hand, claims of theorists sometimes have to be mediated by classroom exigencies, as I found, for example, in trying to co-construct the curriculum; on the other hand, I have also emphasized the impossibility of a prescriptive blueprint, yet I believe there is still much the struggling critical teacher can relate to and learn from the challenges and experiences I faced in implementing a critical pedagogy into daily practice.

6.3.2 The voice of the students

Students play a central role in CLP – learning occurs through dialogical exchange among students and teacher about real-life issues that are meaningful to students and the goal of critical pedagogy is to empower students in order to improve their life chances personally, sociopolitically and academically (Benesch, 2001; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Pennycook, 2001). Nevertheless, there has been very little in the literature that explores *their* responses to such a pedagogy. My study focuses predominantly on students' perspectives and performances, asking them what meanings *they* make of a critical language classroom. I believe my study provides a deeper understanding of students' personal, and

ideological perspectives, of what *they* consider to be meaningful, engaged learning experiences and of how *they* relate to a critical language pedagogy.

My students emphasized over and over that they wanted to learn what was relevant to their lives. This included knowing what Canadian society's expectations were as well as learning about their rights as ESL students, so that they would not be manipulated by the system. Some also talked of having gained confidence through the course, not only because their linguistic ability had improved, but also because they had learned what their rights were and how to stand up for them. They emphasized that it was not useful to only learn practical skills such as grammar or note-taking. They needed to learn the skills that would prepare them to become active, critical, equal participants in their new society.

Intrinsic to my critical teaching practice, was the desire to provide my students with alternative perspectives, and possibilities for reflection on comparative versions of social justice, to offer them a window to different world views. My students embraced these opportunities enthusiastically; they engaged in lively dialogical exchanges, negotiating meaning with students from different cultures; they expressed agency by challenging each other and me as their teacher, as well as oppressive behaviours that they encountered outside the classroom; some of them transformed their lives by critiquing traditional, limiting, unfair assumptions; and some even tried to alert others to the possibilities of different ways of being in the world. Thus this study provides an intimate look at the possibilities of an innovative and empowering teaching and learning experience, one that offers more than the traditional "banking" system of education which deposits information into passive, receptive students (Freire, 2007).

6.3.3 Turning the lens on the researcher

Many scholars describe the interconnection between the teacher's identity and its influence on the critical process, and the need for ongoing self-reflection and self-questioning (Kumashiro, 2002; Lee, 2007; Morgan, 1998). However, few researchers have studied themselves, as teachers, along with the students and the program. By investigating my own practice, I exposed my own personal vulnerabilities as well as my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. To engage in the "critical" is to step away from a textbook and prescriptive curriculum and move out of a safe comfort zone; it is an undertaking fraught with unpredictability, complexity and unknowability. As a teacher I took this risk and then, as a researcher, I turned back to investigate the consequences. Consequently, I believe my study provides an original, authentic and deeply personal account of the critical language classroom.

6.3.4 Contribution to academic theory

While many critical scholars have worked in more homogeneous settings, with students from similar socio-economic, educational and political backgrounds, I wanted to understand how CLP would work in a diverse, multicultural setting, with students from democratic and authoritarian countries, from modern, emancipated societies and traditional patriarchal, socially and culturally stratified communities. This necessitated drawing from critical language theorists (Benesch, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2001; Canagarajah, 2004, 2005; Pennycook, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2004) as well as the theories regarding the politics of difference, identity theorists and critical multicultural theorists (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; May, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Rattansi, 1999; Taylor, 1994). Thus my study

contributes significantly to a rapprochement between broader social justice theorizing at both macro and micro levels.

6.3.5 Research for social change

A major goal of critical ethnographic research is that it promotes social equity, challenges and influences public policy, social movements and sociopolitical life (Canagarajah, 2005; Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Duff, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 1994). On the other hand, some theorists prefer to emphasize the production of knowledge over attempting to change policy and practice (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Vidich & Lyman, 2000). While I intended my research to contribute to the knowledge in the field of critical language pedagogy, an explicit goal of mine was also that information from my study would help ESL students challenge inequality and unfairness in the classroom, in the academy and in their own lives.

Based on my research, I contend that researchers can accomplish both. As I have discussed above, I believe this research provides a more nuanced and complex study of the meanings students make in a CLP classroom, thus adding to the accumulation of data in an under-researched area. In addition, through our classroom activities and pedagogy a number of students indicated that they were more aware of their rights as ESL students and immigrants. Many also indicated the importance of learning about their rights so they would not be taken advantage of. Some even related incidents where they had challenged perceived unfairness in Canadian society because they now knew their rights and felt confident to demand them. Some students also challenged oppressive behaviours in their own cultures, and encouraged their friends and families to do likewise.

In Chapter 3 I discussed my previous teaching practice which was oriented to a social justice pedagogy. However, I never identified as a "criticalist" since I always felt intimidated by the call for "collective action" and "revolutionary change" (Giroux, 1983; McLaren & Torres, 1999). Other theorists, however, desire a more moderate and humble approach to social change, believing that reform can be more effective in improving students lives than waiting for a full-blown revolution, while attitudinal shifts may happen gradually over time (Benesch, 1991, 2001; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Pennycook, 2001, 2004; Rattansi, 1999; Vandrick, 1995).

My study provides numerous examples of how classroom pedagogy promoted social equity and encouraged students to challenge unfair practices in their personal lives and within the sociopolitical context. Within their own lives, this was illustrated by Gail when she challenged a Canadian bus driver whom she considered rude and impolite. She explained that the class had given her confidence, not only linguistically, but in terms of learning about her rights. Similarly, Susan challenged a city official for behaving unfairly and elicited an apology from him. In addition, many students shared stories of how they encouraged friends and family, both in Canada and in their home countries, to reflect on oppressive practices such as the death penalty and homophobia.

In Chapter 3 I argued that a critical pedagogue needs to become a critical advocate outside the classroom. I explained that I have the opportunity to contribute to policy and curricula decisions through the various committees on which I serve. My research will provide me with more concrete academic data from which to discuss discriminatory practices and advocate for a more inclusive and egalitarian learning environment for English language learners. For example, Barbara explained how she was silenced by the

behaviour of her classmates in her Psychology course. Despite being an A student, she considered not attending class because of the way she and other ESL students were treated by their non-ESL peers.

ESL students have often been positioned as "passive" and "uncritical thinkers" by instructors, both ESL and university-credit instructors; however, my students emerge from the study as active, agentive, with high functioning reasoning skills, displaying a wide variety of identities and subjectivities. Presenting this research to my colleagues both within my department and the wider university may lead to a more nuanced and deeper understanding of, and respect for, English language learners who have traditionally been marginalized in the academy.

Thus, I believe this study will enable me to more effectively challenge and influence public policy on behalf of English language learners. In all these respects, therefore, this study fulfills the requirements for "research for social change."

6.4 Implications for future research

I concur with Lee (2007) in recommending that critical language teacher education is essential in reimagining a teacher identity that is cognizant of power disparities in TESOL, and looks for ways of integrating a critical pedagogy into the teaching of practical language skills. However, because CLP theorists and teacher trainers often have a lot of investment in this particular form of pedagogy, there is a danger of it becoming too prescriptive and hegemonic in itself (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993, 1998; Johnston, 1999; Lather, 1992; Weiler, 1996). It is important to recognize that in empowering our students, we cannot control what they are empowered to do, which may include challenging or even rejecting the very pedagogies that we are committed to. Therefore, given the amount of

research that highlights resistance to such teacher education programs (Benesch, 2001; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Gore, 1992; Lin, 2004; Willett & Jeannot, 1993), I recommend further research, particularly from the perspectives of the student teachers themselves, in order to more fully understand the reasons for the documented resistance to critical language teacher education programs.

Given the paucity of studies on the implementation of CLP in the classroom, more such studies need to be undertaken in order to present a fuller picture of how students negotiate a critical language classroom. Although my students were predominantly from China, they represented a total of 12 different ethnicities, were generally middle-class, with high school and post-secondary education and aged 19 – 45. More studies with different variables, such as younger students, or refugees, could yield further interesting insights.

There has been a lot of debate regarding the struggle to both empower students with an emancipatory critical agenda, as well as improve their practical language skills. My data supports the contention of scholars who believe that it is possible to do both (Benesch, 2001; Lee, 2007; Morgan, 1992/1993, 1997, 1998, 2004). Many students expressed the importance of learning about their rights and emphasized that these kinds of dialogical, interactive activities around issues important to their lives, actually *fostered* their language learning. However, my thesis does not show whether such a class results in better language skills, but rather that CLP offers one of many ways in which language can be taught. Research that compares the learning outcomes of students in a CLP class and a non-CLP may provide further valuable information.

In Chapter 4 I discussed oppositional behaviour and drop-outs, concluding that this is a complex topic with no categorical answers. I noted that of the 10 students who dropped

out of my classes over three semesters for no apparent reasons, all were young Chinese students, seven of whom were males. This led me to surmise that young male Chinese students may be the group most alienated by language education, both critical and traditional. Research into this possibility could yield a rich source of information.

Finally, a number of students discussed parental pressure to learn English and to learn it as quickly as possible in order to get on with their "real" academic studies. The impact of such pressure and parents' often unrealistic expectations of language learning on the implementation of a CLP program would also be useful and informative.

6.5 Limitations to the study

Firstly, my study is an analysis of one Listening and Speaking course, taught over three semesters with four different classes. It therefore cannot and should not provide an "instruction booklet" for teachers with which to arm themselves as they venture into their "critical classrooms." While I hope that my study will provide teachers and theorists with "examples of critical practice for scrutiny and reflection" (Benesch, 2001, p.141), different time, space and contexts will generate unknowable and unpredictable situations which may have no parallels with my project.

Secondly, the analysis of the in-depth private interviews, which formed a large part of my data, needs to be problematized. It is important not to conflate what students reported to me and what happened. For example, while a number of students related incidents of racism to me, I did not corroborate these with observed incidents. Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge the impact of the interviewer on the interview process itself and to question how my identities as a researcher/their former teacher/white female might have influenced

how my students constructed their responses. There was some evidence to draw on to support the validity of the participants' responses:

- A student responded to my interview technique of embedding questions into a conversation by explaining: "If you go point by point I would try to give you what you want….But because you're going like a conversation, then everybody [gives you] their personal opinion" (Simon (24): Interview 19/06/08).

- Students did not *only* answer positively, giving me the answers they thought I may have wanted; for example, three women strongly criticized me for not controlling one of the dominant students.

- Assuming that students respond to interviews in ways that they think will please the interviewer, ignores the increasing evidence which suggests that the researcher's power over participants is often limited and partial (Benesch, 2001; Olesen, 2000).

    However, Holstein and Gubrium (2004) and Talmy (in press) argue that the conventional interview process itself should be questioned; instead of being regarded as a neutral site, it should be viewed as social encounter wherein meaning is negotiated and locally constructed. Thus, in representing and discussing students' perspectives in my research project, it is important to recognize the distinction between what students did or said they did and what they reported within the context of the interview with me (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Talmy, in press). Although I did not always reference this principle in my discussion and analysis of interview excerpts, I acknowledge that my data are not always "facts," but perspectives produced through interactions with me for research purposes.

A further limitation is that I was investigating my own practice and my own former students. While such a close emic stance has many advantages – deep knowledge of the context, close relationship and good rapport with my students – there are some obvious limitations: the researcher's own vulnerability; a natural defensiveness towards one's own work; and the difficulty of looking with a researcher's eye at what has probably become for me unreflexive ways of doing after many years of teaching. Would an outside observer see things differently?

I grappled with this question throughout my year-long project. At first, I decided to have a colleague come and observe my class. However, I decided against it for two main reasons: Firstly, I valued the openness and warm relationship my students and I had and felt an outsider would compromise this. This is particularly true in discussing some of the controversial and sensitive topics. CLP emphasizes the positive aspects of "speaking out" as an empowering mechanism, but researchers have pointed out that classrooms are not always safe places and teachers are not always supportive (Ellsworth, 1992; Orner, 1992; Stein, 2004). While my students were often outspoken, we had established a trusting and respectful relationship over the 14 weeks of the course. I would have been uncomfortable encouraging such openness in the presence of an outside observer. Secondly, critical moments often occur unpredictably and spontaneously. The presence of a stranger in our classroom may have inhibited this.

I therefore opted for acknowledging the drawbacks of such research, journaling consistently as a means to self-reflect and audio-taping extensively, both my participation as well as the students, in class. I began doing this more frequently after the first semester since all the students had given me permission to use their in-class work and discussions for

my study. Over the course of the entire year-long project 49 out of a total of 61 students

gave me permission to use their class work for my study. This meant I had a very large

body of authentic classroom dialogue and performance on which to base my analysis and

interpretations.

Moreover, I have included large sections of dialogue in order to allow the reader

space to be a co-participant in the interpretation of my data rather than the traditional

passive recipient of knowledge (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

Although as the researcher I stand by my analysis, I also recognize that the nature of

qualitative critical ethnographic inquiry does not depend on or require fixed and final

"answers." In addition, the limitations of investigating my own practice, as outlined above,

mitigate against a teleological Truth. In the following section, I expand on this further.

6.5.1 Final words on interpretation

I began this dissertation with an extract from my diary which revealed my deep

anxieties over critical language pedagogy – what exactly is CLP and was I even "doing it,"

let alone doing it "correctly?" These fears never really dissipated throughout the year of my

teaching and researching. It is only after analyzing my students' classroom dialogues and

other activities, as well as our in-depth private interviews, that I can conclude that our

classes did contain many of the essential elements of a critical language pedagogy.

But I have no doubt that these fears and uncertainties will rear their head again the

next time I step into my classroom. Such is the nature of critical pedagogy that we can

make no final pronouncements on it (Auerbach, 1995; Canagarajah, 2005; Kincheloe &

McLaren, 2000; Pennycook, 2001). There is unfortunately no blueprint that I can pull from

my desk and walk into class with and be assured of "success" the next time. A new class, a

different group of students, from different backgrounds, under different circumstances and we begin anew.

But never completely from scratch, for I will draw on these experiences and my reflections and integrate them into the next class, which will in turn initiate a whole new set of different responses and reactions and so on and on…

Thus I do not presume a final conclusive interpretation of data, events, experiences and conceptualizations for "critical hermeneutics is suspicious of any model of interpretation that claims to reveal the final truth, the essence of a text…[because] the meaning of human experience can never be fully disclosed" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 289).

I began Chapter 4 by inviting you into my classroom to observe my students and me as we grappled to make sense of a critical language pedagogy. I end Chapter 6, but leave the door open, so you may revisit, respond to, or re-evaluate my observations and interpretations, for I would like this narrative to be the catalyst for further discussion, not an end in itself.

The lights are out, the students long dispersed to other classes, and other places, but I hope *our* conversation, dear reader, will continue.

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Appendix A: Official Course Outline

COURSE OUTLINE

REVISION

Department: English Language Studies
Course Number: ELST ▮▮ 243
Credits: 3
Descriptive Title: Academic Listening and Speaking Skills – Level 2

Calendar Description
Students at the lower-advanced level will learn and practice academic listening and speaking skills.

Required for the following credentials:
Diploma of Proficiency in English Language Studies – Academic Stream

Recommended for the following credentials:
Prerequisites:
ELST ▮▮ 132 with a B or
(Accuplacer 88 and KIST 35)
or TOEFL iBT 61 with listening sub-score 15 and speaking sub-score 15
or [(TSE 35 or SPEAK 35) and (cb-TOEFL Listening Scaled Score 16 or TOEFL Listening Scaled Score 50)]
or IELTS 5.5 with no sub-score less than 5.0

Corequisites:

Transferable (Yrs 1 and 2)**:** Refer to the BCCAT Transfer Guide

Transferable (Yrs 3 and 4 or other)**:** Individual articulation agreements

Not Transferable: X

Revision Implementation date: September 2006

Course to be reviewed by (mth/yr): September 2011

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

A student who successfully completes the course will have reliably demonstrated the ability to:

Listening:
- Identify the main ideas and supporting details
- Analyze material critically for fact, opinion, and different points of view
- Understand abstract ideas on familiar topics
- Determine meaning of vocabulary items using context, word forms, and collocations
- Take notes in order to answer questions

Speaking:
- Give academically-oriented oral presentations of up to 15 minutes in length

- Speak fluently in small group discussions, debates, and panels on general topics
- Speak with reasonable fluency on less familiar and abstract topics and ideas
- Use critical thinking skills to substantiate opinions and evaluate arguments
- Use appropriate vocabulary with minimal rewording, rephrasing, or hesitation
- Use a wide range of grammatical structures with a limited number of errors that interfere with communication
- Produce sustained fluent speech in which pronunciation errors are limited and do not interfere with communication
- The listening portion uses simulated and authentic academic material which contains some low-frequency vocabulary and is up to 30 minutes in length

CONTENT
Content will include, but is not restricted to, the following:
- Strategies for predicting content of listening materials
- Characteristics of a lecture discourse
- Formal and informal register
- Note-taking strategies
- Revision of notes for study purposes
- Steps in preparing a standard oral presentation
- Techniques of oral presentation
- Techniques for evaluating and giving feedback
- Roles in group discussions
- Appropriate language functions
- Appropriate discussion strategies
- Critical thinking
- Debating skills
- Pronunciation exercises

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

A student who successfully completes the course will have reliably demonstrated the following employability skills:

Creative thinking and problem solving skills
- brainstorming
- organizing ideas into outlines
- analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating information from different sources

Oral Skills
- conducting interviews
- giving presentations
- maintaining discussions

Interpersonal skills
- responding tactfully to the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of others
- contributing to a climate where work is mutually beneficial

Teamwork and leadership skills
- participating actively and productively in groups
- establishing co-operative working relationships with others in the group

Visual literacy
- using and interpreting visual aids, such as graphs, charts, timelines, and pictorial representations

Intercultural skills
- recognizing and respecting diversity and individual differences

Technological skills
- using the computer for research

Citizenship and global perspective
- participating in discussions on current events
- understanding cross-cultural differences

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activities may include, but are not restricted to, the following:
- Participating in classroom discussions, debates, and panels
- Participating in role plays/simulation activities
- Giving news reports
- Using the language laboratory
- Taking notes
- Participating in group (co-operative) learning activities
- Analyzing videos and radio documentaries
- Completing contact assignments (such as interviews and surveys)
- Responding to lectures, discussions, and guest speakers
- Conducting research using a variety of sources
- Integrating research information into presentations
- Giving formal and informal oral presentations

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Grading system used X LETTER GRADE MAS EXP
Assessment plans comply with NWU policy and resemble the following:
- Note-taking and listening comprehension tests (min. of three) 30%
- Oral tasks, formal and informal (min. of three) 30%
- Assignments and quizzes 10%
- Final Exam (listening and oral assessment) 30%
- Total 100%

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences in excess of two (2) classes may result in a student being placed on a performance contract. Excused absences will include serious illness and urgent family or personal matters. Upon request, a student must produce documentation that satisfactorily supports that absence. A student who, while present, fails to participate satisfactorily in pair and group work, thereby putting the learning objectives of his or her classmates at risk, may be placed on a performance contract.

METHODS FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT
As this is a developmental course, PLA is not appropriate.

TEACHING MODES
Hours per Week   Class Size   Duration (in weeks) Classroom-Related Instruction (Lecture)
     4   17   15

Simulated Learning Environment (Lab)
Individual Learning Environment (Lab)
Practicum Supervision/Field Experience
Reality Learning Environment

LEARNING RESOURCES

Required Textbooks, Lab or Shop Manuals, Equipment, etc.
A listening text such as the following or equivalent:
Beglar, D. and Murray, N. *Contemporary Topics 3: Advanced Listening Comprehension.*
New York: Pearson Education. ESL (Latest Edition)

and

A speaking text such as one of the following or equivalent:
Hoppenrath, C. and Royal, W. *The World Around Us: Canadian Social Issues for ESL Students.*
Toronto. Harcourt Canada (Latest Edition)

or

An integrated listening/speaking text such as one of the following or equivalent
Carlisi, K. and Christie, S. *Tapestry 3: Listening and Speaking.* Boston: Nelson (Latest Edition)

Recommended Textbooks, Lab or Shop Manuals, Equipment, etc.
BIBLIOGRAPHY ATTACHED? (for suggested library acquisitions)
Yes No X
Do library resources in this area need more development?
Yes No X
APPROVAL PROCESS SIGNATURES

This Course Outline complies with the relevant NWU policies. It follows the guidelines set out in the **Course Outline Manual.** *Department or program learning objectives/outcomes and employability skills that have been identified in this Course Outline can be reasonably achieved through this Course.*

Course developer(s): _____ Date: _____
███████████████████

Department chair: _____ Date: _____
███████████████████

Divisional Dean: _____ Date: _____
███████████

Chair, Education Council: _____ Date: _____
████████████

Appendix B: Course Presentation

<div align="right">Instructor: Wendy Royal</div>

Course: ELST ▮▮ 243

Classroom:	2725
Class Times:	12:00 - 13:50 Tuesdays, Thursdays
Duration:	September 04 – December 10, 2007.
Lab:	Tuesdays 13:00 – 14:00
Final Exam:	**Thursday December 13, 2007 11:30 – 14:30 Room 1355**
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 14:00 - 14.50, Thursdays 15:00 - 15:50.
	Other times by appointment only.
Office:	2160B

Course Description

Academic Listening and Speaking - Level 2 is a 3-credit course for students whose native language is not English. The course focuses on building the language skills necessary to work effectively in a university transfer or career course, with an emphasis on improving accuracy in listening and speaking. It is intended for students at the lower-advanced level of language proficiency.

Through classroom tasks and projects, students also develop critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, personal management, intercultural communication and demonstrate technological knowledge.

This is not a general English course; it is a specialized course for academic English and requires a lot of work. Students should expect to spend a minimum of 8 hours a week outside of class doing assignments, reviewing work covered in class, preparing for projects, listening to a variety of aural media, recording oral journals and practicing pronunciation.

Required Textbook

Speaking Solutions: Interaction, presentation, listening, and pronunciation skills by

Candace Matthews

Please note: Xeroxed textbooks are illegal under copyright laws and will not be permitted in the classroom.

In addition you will need:

- A three-ring binder to organize class notes, tests, and assignments.
- 100 lined loose pages for class assignments and note-taking.

These supplies are available at the bookstore. Please purchase them as soon as possible.
You will also have to keep an oral journal and submit it to me every three weeks. (I will tell you more about this later)

Evaluation

Your final grades will be determined as follows:

Listening :
    Note-taking, comprehension tests etc.   **30%**
Speaking:
    Oral tasks, Formal and informal   **30%**
Assignments:
    Group discussions, contact assignments, interviews etc.   **10%**

Final Exam (Listening and Oral Assessment)   **30%**

Please note that all assignments that are graded will count towards your final mark.

Students must obtain a score of B– in ELST ▮▮▮ 243 for entry into ELST ▮▮▮ 243.

Course Activities

These include:

- Listening to a variety of simulated and real academically-oriented material and
    - identifying the main ideas and supporting details
    - taking notes
    - analyzing the material for fact, opinion and different points of view
    - answering questions based on the material etc

- Giving informal and formal oral presentations, including.
  - choosing and researching topics
  - organizing information
  - using appropriate language, body language and visual aids etc.
- Participating in small group discussions, interviews, and contact assignments .

Attendance Policy

The attendance and participation policy of the English Language Studies Department is as follows:

> Students enrolled in English Studies courses work extensively in pairs and groups in order to meet communication objectives. Consequently, absences affect every member of the class. Unexcused absences in excess of two (2) classes may result in a student being placed on a performance contract. Excused absences include serious illness and urgent family or personal matters. Upon request, a student must produce documentation that satisfactorily supports the excuse given. A student who, while present, fails to participate satisfactorily in pair or group work, thereby putting the learning objectives of his or her classmates at risk, may be placed on a performance contract.

Class Responsibilities:

- **You are responsible for all the work you miss. If you are absent, contact a classmate to find out about missed work and assignments. You will lose marks for missed assignments and tests. If you are absent due to illness, please email me or phone me and leave a message.**

- All assignments must be submitted on 8.5" X 11" paper, **double-spaced**. They should be typewritten (unless otherwise specified) on one side of the page, with a 1" margin on all sides. Work that does not confirm to these requirements may be returned. (Please discuss with me if work cannot be typewritten.)

- Assignments are expected to be submitted **on time**. If for some reason you are unable to complete an assignment by the due date, see me. Otherwise, assignments that are late will lose marks and **assignments handed in after they have been corrected or worked on in class will not be accepted.**

- Students who miss a test as a result of being absent, or arrive after a test has been finished, will lose marks. Tests are usually given at the beginning of class. Students who arrive late will not be given extra time. **You will need a doctor's certificate in order to write a missed test**.

- Students are expected to arrive **on time** for their classes. Students who arrive late without a legitimate excuse may be asked not to attend class on that day.

- Students are expected to use **English only** in the classroom.

- The use of cell phones and electronic dictionaries are not permitted in the classroom. Please ensure your cell phones are switched off before entering the classroom. Cell phones that interrupt class time may be confiscated.

If students wish to withdraw from the course before the end of the semester, they should notify the admissions office on the dates mentioned in the registration guide; otherwise they will receive an "F" on their transcript. The instructor will advise students of their progress and probable final grade.

The College Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating

Cheating, which includes plagiarism, occurs when a student or group of students uses or attempts to use unauthorized aids, assistance, materials, or methods. Cheating is a serious educational offence.

Plagiarism occurs when a student represents the work of another person as his or her own. The University condemns all forms of cheating. It will discipline students who are cheating in the following manner:

1. For most first offences, a grade of zero will be awarded for the affected assignment, test, paper, analysis etc.
2. For most second offences, a failing grade will be assigned in the affected course.
3. Depending upon the circumstances surrounding the first or second offence, a more severe level of discipline may be imposed by the University College.
4. Where deemed appropriate in the circumstances, for any third offence, the matter

must be referred to the University College President under Policy C.21 Student Conduct for the assignment of discipline, which may include suspension or expulsion from the University College.

Appendix C: Consent Form # 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca

Consent Form # 1 for students
Requesting consent for copies of class assignments

Title of Study: Students' conceptions and experiences of critical language pedagogy

Principal Investigator: Prof. Kogila Adam-Moodley
                                 Department of Educational Studies
                                 Faculty of Education
                                 University of British Columbia
                                 Telephone number: 604-822-4315

Co-Investigator(s):   Wendy Royal
                                 PhD student
                                 Department of Educational Studies
                                 Faculty of Education
                                 University of British Columbia
                                 Telephone number: 604-619-1639

Purpose:
Your teacher, Wendy Royal, is also a PhD student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia.   Under the supervision of Prof. Kogila Adam-Moodley, she is doing research on critical language pedagogy (CLP). CLP is an approach to teaching English as a second language (ESL) that promotes language competency through content that comes from real-world situations and issues outside the classroom. Students develop critical thinking skills by reflecting on and discussing problems that are meaningful to their lives. The goal of this

teaching approach is to help students learn English *and* improve their lives, by developing skills to recognize and challenge unfairness and inequality. Through classroom dialogue, the students and teacher develop alternative strategies to resolve these problems and issues.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how ESL students, from a variety of countries and cultures across the world, conceptualize (understand) and experience critical pedagogy in an ESL academic preparation class in a post-secondary institution in Vancouver.

Use of class work and teacher's notes for research purposes
Wendy will teach your class this semester in exactly the same way as she always does, using CLP.   However, she would like to get your consent (permission) to collect copies of your individual written and individual audio-taped class and homework assignments to use as part of her research data in January, 2008. She would also like to get your consent to use the notes which she normally takes in class on your classroom participation and interaction, for her research data in January, 2008.   She will only begin to analyze copies of your assignments and her notes in January, 2008, *after* the semester is finished and grades have been assigned. This data will be used in her PhD dissertation which is a public document.

Voluntary participation
You have the right to give consent or not. Your consent is completely voluntary. You can withdraw your consent at any time. Even if you do not want to give consent, or if you withdraw your consent, you will still receive the same quality of instruction. The assignments and activities will be exactly the same as they always are in Wendy's class. Wendy will take notes on classroom participation and student interactions as she usually does as part of her normal teaching practice. Your decision also will not influence your grades or studies. The signed form below will be kept at NWU Office of Research and Scholarship in a sealed envelope, so your teacher, Wendy, will have no knowledge of who has given permission and who has not until the course is finished and your grades have been assigned.   Your decision will also not influence the instruction or grades you receive in any future classes you make take with Wendy or any other instructor at NWU.

Study Procedures:
After the semester has finished and your grades have been assigned, Wendy will be given the consent forms. If you have given consent, she will then contact you again, by email or post, to remind you that you have given permission for her to use copies of your individual written and individual audio-taped class and homework assignments in her research project. If you have changed your mind and do not want copies of your

assignments to be used in the research project, or if you do not want Wendy to include any notes she may have taken on your classroom participation and interactions, you can withdraw your consent at this time. Wendy will not include in her research, copies of the assignments, written and audio-taped, of those who have not given consent. She will also not include in her research any notes she has taken on the classroom behaviour of those students who have not given consent.

Potential Risks:
Because CLP draws the curriculum out of students' own lives and experiences, you may feel some discomfort in discussing and writing about these issues. However, the CLP classroom emphasizes a trusting and respectful environment. Discussions on all topics are entirely voluntary – nobody is required or forced to talk or write about anything they do not want to talk or write about.   In addition, Wendy also routinely seeks input from relevant experts - both professional and non-professional – in the local community to ensure her teaching materials, activities and methodologies are appropriate.

Potential Benefits:
The information from the study could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLP as an approach to both learning English and challenging inequality and unfairness in the classroom, in post-secondary institutions and in your own lives.

It could also influence curricular and professional development both in the English Language Studies Department and in the wider university, which could help educators to provide a more inclusive and egalitarian learning environment for English language learners.

Confidentiality:
All your individual written and individual audio-taped assignments will be treated confidentially, that is no one will know whose assignments they are except Wendy. Wendy will give a code or secret name to each person's written and oral assignments and to her notes on your classroom behaviour so that you cannot be identified.   If necessary, she will also change any details in your written and oral assignments and classroom behaviour that could identify you.   All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All the data records that are kept on a computer hard disk will be password protected.   You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Remuneration/Compensation:
There will be no monetary compensation. However, if you would like a copy of the findings from this research project, please provide a mailing address below.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Prof. Adam-Moodley or her associates at 604-822-4315.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about the use of copies of your class and homework assignments and teacher notes on your classroom participation and interactions for research purposes, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or the NWU Office of Research and Scholarship.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to allow copies of your class and homework to be used for research purposes. You may also refuse to allow teacher notes on your classroom participation and interactions to be used for research purposes. You may withdraw your work and the teacher's notes on your classroom behaviour from the study at any time without jeopardy to your class standing, both in current and future classes.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

_____

Subject Signature   Date

_____

Printed Name of the Subject   Date

_____

_____

Mailing address of subject

Appendix D: Letter of Contact

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca

Letter of Contact and Reminder of Consent
for copies of class assignments

Title of Study: Students' conceptions and experiences of critical language pedagogy

Principal Investigator: Prof. Kogila Adam‑Moodley
        Department of Educational Studies
        Faculty of Education
        University of British Columbia
        Telephone number: 604-822-4315

Co-Investigator(s):   Wendy Royal
        PhD student
        Department of Educational Studies
        Faculty of Education
        University of British Columbia

Telephone number: 604-619-1639
Email: wendyroyal@hotmail.com

Dear Students,

Purpose:
Last September, 2007 you gave me permission to use copies of your class assignments for my PhD research project. Under the supervision of Prof. Kogila Adam-Moodley, I will investigate students' conceptions and experiences of critical language pedagogy (CLP). Critical language pedagogy is an approach to teaching English as a second language (ESL)

that promotes language competency through content that comes from real-world situations and issues outside the classroom. Students develop critical thinking skills by reflecting on and discussing problems that are meaningful to their lives. The goal of this teaching approach is to help students learn English *and* improve their lives, by developing skills to recognize and challenge unfairness and inequality. Through classroom dialogue, the students and teacher develop alternative strategies to resolve these problems and issues.

Voluntary participation

If you have changed your mind and no longer want me to include copies of you assignments in my research project, you may withdraw at this point without any consequences. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the project at any time. Even if you do not want to participate, or if you withdraw, you will still receive the same quality of instruction. Your decision also will not influence your grades or studies.

Study procedures:

At this point, I would also like to invite you to participate further in my research project. If you agree, I would like to interview you privately. This will take about 30 minutes for the first interview, 20 minutes for a follow-up interview and about 20 minutes for a final interview. The final interview will give you the opportunity to review my findings and contribute any further input or clarification. I would also like to have a discussion in a small focus group of about 5- 6 students. This will take about 40 minutes – 1 hour. Your total time commitment to the project will be between about two hours over four months, between January and April, 2008. I will audio-tape the interviews and focus groups discussions. You can refuse to be audio-taped and/or take part in the focus groups. The purpose of these interviews is to understand students' perspectives of a course that uses a CLP approach. The data from these interviews will be used in my PhD dissertation.

Potential Risks:

Because CLP draws the curriculum out of students' own lives and experiences, you may feel some discomfort in talking about personal or political issues. Discussions on all topics are entirely voluntary – nobody is required or forced to talk about anything they do not want to talk about.

Potential Benefits:

Besides helping me complete the requirements for my PhD, the information you provide could contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLP as an approach to both learning English and challenging inequality and unfairness in the classroom, in post-secondary institutions and in your own lives.

This research could also influence curricula and professional development, both in the English Language Studies Department and the wider university. This could help educators to provide a more inclusive and egalitarian learning environment for our English language learners.

Confidentiality
All documents and audiotapes will be kept strictly confidential, that is no one will know whose they are except me. They will be given a code or secret name so that you cannot be identified. If necessary, any details that could identify you will be changed. All documents and audio-tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All the data records that are kept on a computer hard disk will be password protected. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Remuneration/Compensation:
As participation is voluntary, there will be no monetary compensation. However, I will bring snacks for us to share at the interviews and small focus groups. I will also have a party or take you to dinner after the research is over in order to express my appreciation for participating in the study.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Prof. Adam-Moodley or one of her associates at 604-822-4315, or Wendy Royal at 604-619-1639.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or NWU Office of Research and Scholarship at 604-599-2373

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me either by phone, in writing or by email at the above addresses. Since the data collection has to be completed by the end of April, 2008, I would appreciate it if you could make your decision by 1 February, 2008. If you have any questions, or require further explanation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Wendy Royal

Appendix E: Consent Form # 2

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca

Consent Form # 2 for students
Requesting consent for participation in interviews and focus groups

Title of Study: Students' conceptions and experiences of critical language pedagogy

Principal Investigator: Prof. Kogila Adam-Moodley
                        Department of Educational Studies
                        Faculty of Education
                        University of British Columbia
                        Telephone number: 604- 822-4315

Co-Investigator(s):   Wendy Royal
                        PhD student
                        Department of Educational Studies
                        Faculty of Education
                        University of British Columbia
                        Telephone number: 604-619-1639

Purpose:
I am a PhD student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia.   Under the supervision of Prof. Kogila Adam-Moodley, I am doing research on critical language pedagogy (CLP). CLP is an approach to teaching English as a second language (ESL) that promotes language competency through content that comes from real-world situations and issues outside of the classroom. Students develop critical thinking skills by reflecting on and discussing problems that are meaningful to their lives. The goal of this teaching approach is to help students learn English *and* improve their lives, by developing skills to recognize and

challenge unfairness and inequality. Through classroom dialogue, the students and teacher develop alternative strategies to resolve these problems and issues.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how ESL students, from a variety of countries and cultures across the world, conceptualize (understand) and experience critical pedagogy in an ESL academic preparation class in a post-secondary institution in Vancouver.

Voluntary participation
You have the right to give consent or not. Your consent is completely voluntary. You can withdraw your consent at any time. Even if you do not want to give consent, or if you withdraw your consent, you will still receive the same quality of instruction. Your decision also will not influence your grades or studies in your current classes or in any future classes.

Study Procedures:
I will interview you privately and in small focus groups of about 5-6 students. The first interview will take about 30 minutes; the second about 20 minutes and the small focus group interview will take between 40 minutes – 1 hour. I will also present my preliminary findings to you for agreement, clarification or disagreement. This will take about 20 minutes. Your participation in this study will take approximately two hours over four months, January to April, 2008. I will audiotape the interviews and focus group discussions. You can refuse to be audio-taped or take part in the focus groups. The data from interviews and focus groups will be used in my PhD dissertation which is a public document.

Potential Risks:
Because CLP draws the curriculum out of students' own lives and experiences, you may feel some discomfort in talking about personal or political issues. Discussions on all topics are entirely voluntary – nobody is required or forced to talk about anything they do not want to talk about. Declining to talk on any topic will not influence your grades or standing in any present or future classes you may take with Wendy or any other instructor.

Potential Benefits:
The information from the study could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLP as an approach to both learning English and challenging inequality and unfairness in the classroom, in post-secondary institutions and in your own lives.

It could also influence curricular and professional development both in the English Language Studies Department and in the wider university, which could help educators to provide a more inclusive and egalitarian learning environment for English language learners.

If you would like a copy of the findings from this research project, please provide a mailing address below.

Confidentiality:
All documents and audiotapes be kept strictly confidential, that is, no one will know whose work it is except me. They will be given a code or secret name so that you cannot be identified.   If necessary, any details that could identify you will be changed. All documents and audio-tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.   All the data records that are kept on a computer hard disk will be password protected.   You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. In focus groups, you are asked not to disclose the information that is discussed in the focus group; however, I cannot control what other participants do with the information discussed.

Remuneration/Compensation:
Since participation is voluntary, there will be no monetary compensation. However, I will bring snacks for us to share at the interviews and small focus groups. I will also have a party or take you to dinner after the research is over in order to express my appreciation for participating in the study.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Prof. Adam - Moodley or one of her associates at 604-822-4315 or me at 604-619-1639.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or NWU Office of Research and Scholarship.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your class standing in any of your current or future classes.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.   You may consent to be interviewed privately and/or in small focus groups. You may consent or decline to be audio-taped.

Interviews:

_____
Subject Signature   Date

Focus groups:

_____
Subject Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of the Subject

Audio-taping:

_____
Subject Signature
Date

_____
Printed Name of the Subject

_____
Mailing address of subject

Appendix F: Student Information Sheet

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮▮▮ 243

Student Information Sheet

1. The name you used on your registration:_____

First name   Family name

2. Student number: _____

3. Country of origin _____

4. Phone # _____

5. E-mail address _____

6. Are you willing to put your name on a group email list?   Yes _____   No _____

7. When did you come to Canada?   _____

8. What languages do you speak? _____

Educational background

9. Where did you learn English before you came to NWU?

_____

_____

10. Which ESL courses have you taken at a Canadian college or university? Where?

When?

_____

_____

11. What level of education did you achieve **before** you came to Canada?

_____

_____

12. What have you done **since** you came to Canada?

_____

_____

13. What courses have you **already** taken at NWU?

ESL_____

_____

Other_____

_____

14. What other courses are you taking **this semester?**

ESL_____

_____

Other_____

_____

15. What are your educational and career goals?

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. What area/s of English due you want to improve this semester?

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. Look at the list of possible topics we can discuss this semester. Rate them in the order of preference, 1 = most interested 17 = least interested

   a.   Family issues e.g. intercultural marriage, gay rights, changes in the family_____

   b.   Homelessness and poverty _____

   c.   AIDS _____

   d.   Medical ethics e.g. Abortion, euthanasia, _____

   e.   Crime and punishment _____

   f.   Educational issues   _____

   g.   Environmental issues_____

   h.   Racism and discrimination _____

   i.   Media _____

   j.   The Internet   _____

   k.   Current events_____

   l.   Sports _____

   m.   Entertainment _____

   n.   Great inventions of the 20th century _____

   o.   Travel _____

   p.   Human rights issues _____

   q.   multiculturalism_____

   r.   Your choice/s

   _____

   _____

   _____

Appendix G: Interview Guidelines

In keeping with qualitative research, my questions revolve around broad themes related to critical pedagogy, rather than ones that are too tightly scripted. This will enable participants to speak more fully in their own voices.

Questions include:

1. **Conceptions of social justice**
   - What is your understanding of social justice?
   - What do you think are the key characteristics of a fair and equal society?
   - If you could improve society, what three things would you do?

2. **Choosing topics: Negotiating the curriculum/ drawing from real life**
   - What topics/activities did you find most interesting/useful? Why?
   - Were there any topics/activities you did not want to discuss or participate in? Which ones? Why?
   - Do you think they were important topics to discuss in the classroom? Why?
   - Do you think the activities such as looking for alternative solutions, interviewing guest speakers were important? Explain.
   - Was there anything you would have preferred to discuss/ do in class?

3. **Connecting classroom learning to the macrostructures of the outside world**
   - Did any of the themes and activities in the class relate to your life and experiences
     - in your country
     - in Canada
       Explain.
   - Did the themes and activities in the class help you to understand Canadian society better? Explain.
   - Have discussions or views on these topics caused problems
     - in your other classes at NWU
     - in the workplace
     - with your own families
     - in your community?
       Explain.
   - Have discussions or views on these topics helped you
     - in your other classes at NWU
     - in the workplace
     - with your own families
     - in your community?
       Explain.

4. **Linguistic issues**
   - Did these discussions help you to learn English? Explain.
   - Did you ever feel you didn't have enough language ability to understand or discuss the problems fully?

- Did you ever try to find out more information after class?
- Did you ever continue discussing these topics and trying to solve the problems with your classmates/friends/family after class?
- If yes, did you use English or your mother tongue? When/ where?

5. Students as agents/students as passive
  - Would you discuss these topics in the classroom in your own country? Explain.
  - Do you discuss these topics in your home/in your community in Canada? Explain.
  - Do you discuss these topics in your home/in your community in your country? Explain.
  - Is it important for you to know my opinion on these issues? Explain.
  - Were your opinions influenced by
    - classmates
    - your family
    - the teacher
    - information you read or heard
        Explain
  - How did you feel in your group or class discussions when you disagreed with others or they disagreed with you?
  - What did you do in your group or class discussions when you disagreed with others or they disagreed with you?

6. Transformative agenda: improving students' lives and making the world a better place
  - Did you find the class helpful in understanding some of the barriers/obstacles/difficulties you face as ESL students? Explain.
  - Did the course give you some ways to challenge or overcome these barriers/ obstacles/ difficulties
    - in your regular courses at NWU
    - as a student at NWU
    - in your life outside the university
        Explain
  - Have your attitudes changed since discussing these topics/ participating in the activities? Explain.
  - Has this class made you want to do something to change your life, and/or the lives of others? Explain.
  - Do you think what you learned in this class can help you to challenge or even overcome inequality and unfairness
    - in the classroom
    - post-secondary institution
    - in your own lives. Explain.

Appendix H: Oral Journal: Social Justice

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▉ 243

Oral Journal Assignment

Every 2- 3 weeks, you will be asked to do an oral journal on topics or we have discussed or materials we have used in class. You can record your oral journals on audio files, pod-casts, digital recorders or cassettes.   If you need help with any of these, you can ask at the library or Learning Centre.

Assignment 1: Due Tuesday September 18, 2007

Write brief answers, in note form, to the questions below, then discuss your answers on your oral journal. Try not to read, but talk in a conversational voice as if you were having a conversation with some friends. You should speak for at least five minutes.

B.C High Schools get "isms" course.

1. **What is the main goal in Social Justice 12?**

2. **Who is likely to take such a course?**

3. **What are the advantages of teaching this course in high school?**

4. **Which 2 groups are against this course?   Why?**

5. **What is your understanding of social justice?**

6. **What do you think are the key characteristics of a fair and equal society?**

7. **If you could improve society, what 3 things would you do?**

Appendix I: Class Discussion

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮ 243

Rights, Obligations and Values

(*Adapted from Speaking Solutions by Candace Matthews p. 87-95*)

Fundamental human rights:
- Right to be treated with respect
- Right to equality
- Right to privacy
- Right to life
- Right to die
- Right to vote
- Right to freedom of speech

In your groups discuss the following questions:

1. Do you think these are universal human rights?

2. Can you add to this list?

3. Are these Rights the same in every country?

4. Do obligations differ from rights? How?

Values: Ideas or concepts that people consider important.   E.g.

Fairness: treating people equally

Honesty: telling the truth

Loyalty: supporting your friends, family, employer, country

Compassion: trying to stop the suffering and pain of others

Tolerance: recognizing and respecting the opinions, practices, beliefs or customs that are

different from your own

Discuss the above list. Do you agree with them? Do all people have the same values?   List five values that are important to you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Situations: Each group has been given a particular situation.   In coming to a group decision, you need to discuss the rights and obligations of the people involved. You will also need to examine your own values in coming to a final decision.

On chart paper, list the rights and obligations of the people involved. List the values that guided your decision.

Appendix J: Oral Journal: Race Riots

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮ 243

Every 2- 3 weeks, you will be asked to do an oral journal on topics or we have discussed or materials we have used in class. You can record your oral journals on audio files, pod-casts, digital recorders or cassettes. If you need help with any of these, you can ask at the library or Learning Centre.

Write brief answers, in note form, to the questions below, then discuss your answers in your oral journal. Try not to read, but talk in a conversational voice as if you were having a conversation with some friends. You should speak for at least 5 minutes.

Commemorating a race riot

1. Given that Canada is now regarded as one of the most tolerant countries in the world, were you surprised to read this article describing Canada's racist past? Give reasons for your answer.

2. After this article appeared in the newspaper last week, a reader wrote another article (*'Shame' the worst trend in journalism'* Vancouver Sun, September 7, 2007 p A11- Louise Howard) suggesting that "many Canadians would be pleased to see a halt (stop) to articles that sensationalize racial incidents". In other words, Ms Howard believes we should not focus on the past wrongs, but on the present.

3. What is your opinion? Should we remember past discrimination or forgot about it and only focus on present policies? Give reasons for your answers.

Appendix K: Discussion: Where the Spirit Lives

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ■ 243

Video: Where the Spirit Lives

Where the Spirit Lives **is set in 1937 and was shot on location in the Canadian Rockies.**

1. Pre-discussion questions.

On the chart paper on the walls, answer the following questions in your group. (Only add new information – don't repeat what's already there.)

1. What do you know about the First Nations of British Columbia?

2. What do you want to know?

3. What do you know about the residential (boarding) schools that First Nations children were sent to in Canada?

4. How did you feel the first time you were in a different culture?

2. Vocabulary

Try to guess the meanings of the following words with your group.

heathen/savage   sexual/physical abuse

brainwashing/indoctrination   inoculation

assimilation   teacher's pet

hypocrites   ritual   betrayal

3. Watching the film:

> **As you watch the film, describe to your partner what is happening in the film.**
>
> **We don't have time to watch the whole film in class, so for homework I would like you to watch the rest of the film and answer the questions below. The film is on reserve at the library. You can borrow it and watch it in groups in the library. This assignment must be done by _____.   As you watch the film, make brief notes.**

Then:

4. Briefly write down the main events of the film in chronological order.

5. Post-discussion Questions: Each group will be responsible for discussing the following:

Group One: Describe three of the traditions/ rituals or ceremonies of the Black foot people.

Group Two: How did the school try to assimilate the First Nations Children? Give specific examples. Were they successful?

Group three: Discuss the three main white characters – Kathleen, the teacher, Mr Taggert, the Indian agent, and Reverend Buckley, the school priest.
How did you feel towards them? Did your feelings towards them change?

Appendix L: Oral Journal: Where the Spirit Lives

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▆▆ 243

Video: Where the Spirit Lives : R11 and 12

Homework: Oral Journal: Due _____

Hand in this page and the previous handout on "Where the Spirit Lives"

 (Write notes here, before you speak into your oral journal)

1. **Briefly discuss the main events of the movie.**

2. **Discuss the question your group answered – either One, Two or Three**

3. **From the notes you took from the speakers in your group, discuss the other two questions.**

4. **What did you learn from this video?**

5. **Can you think of parallels from your own experiences and / or from your own culture that reflects some of the same issues or themes that are presented in this film.**

Appendix M: Contact Assignment: Apology to First Nations

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▌▌▌ 243

Video: Where the Spirit Lives

Homework: Research and Contact assignment   Due: _____

1. **The Canadian government made an historic announcement regarding residential schools last Wednesday June 11, 2008. Find out what it was. (You can google Canadian Residential Schools or go to the CBC website)**

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Survey: Interview 3 English-speaking Canadians. (Try to include

Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds. They should be able to speak reasonably

fluent English)

1. **What do they know about the residential schools?**
2. **Did they read/listen to the government's apology? If so, what was their response to the apology?**
3. **How is the government compensating for the residential schools? Is it adequate/**
4. **Any further thoughts or comments?**
   How did you begin the interview?   How did you end the interview?

Be prepared to discuss your survey results and the above questions in class on _____.

Appendix N: Discussion: Problems in the World/Your Life

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮▮▮ 243

1. **Write down what you think are the five most important issues in the world today.**

   1. _____

   2. _____

   3. _____

   4. _____

   5. _____

2. **Now get into small groups. Compare your ideas with the members of your group. After listening to everybody's ideas, decide again the five most serious issues in the world today. Be prepared to explain and defend your choices.**

3. **Now write down the five most serious issues again, on chart paper, based on your group's discussion. You must come to a group agreement. Choose a person from your group to present and explain your group's decision to the class.**

Useful expressions:

Beginning your report
Mention the names of group members and the purpose of the discussion.

Summarizing your results

e.g During our discussions we decided that….

   To summarize our discussions, we agreed that …..

Organizing your main points, using first, secondly, thirdly, then, finally

Concluding your report

e.g I believe this summarizes our results. Do you have any questions?

A. **Write down what you think are the five most important issues/problems/difficulties in** *your* **life today.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now get into different small groups. Compare your ideas with the members of your group. After listening to everybody's ideas, summarize your findings. Group your findings under similarities and differences.   Choose a different person from your group to present and explain your group's decision to the class.

Useful expressions in addition to those above. Can you add any of your own?

> **Similarities:**
>
> All of us think
>
> Most of us believe
>
> Many of us feel
>
>
>
>
>
> **Differences:**
>
> Some of us…..while others

B. In this class, we will discuss many different issues. We may not always agree with each other, but we need to be able to listen and talk to each openly and respectfully. Write down five ideas that will help us learn English, give opinions, listen to the opinions of others and have discussions in an enjoyable and friendly environment.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix O: Note-taking Test: Guest Speaker

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮ 243

Note-taking test: Youth PrideSpeak Workshop

1. **Vocabulary: Explain the meanings of the following words (6 marks)**

    (a) **gab** _____

    (b) **Queer Prom.** _____

    (c) **Pride** _____

    (d) **Heterosexual** _____

    (e) **Sexual orientation** _____

    (f) **Transgender** _____

2. **Name 3 activities that you can participate in at The LGTB Centre in Vancouver. (3 marks)**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. **Explain why the guest speaker did not think 'normal' was a good definition of 'heterosexual'? How did she explain the word 'normal'? (3 marks)**

    _____

    _____

4. **Briefly discuss the history of the PRIDE Parade which is held in many countries annually. Try to include the following information: (5marks)**
    - **when it began**   - **where it began**
    - **what happened**   - **why there is an annual international parade**

    _____

    _____

    _____

5. **How did the guest speaker's two closest friends react when she told them she was a lesbian? Briefly describe how this affected her experience in high school? (5 marks)**

    _____

    _____

    _____

6. **Describe her relationship with her mother and father when she told them she was a lesbian. How did this affect her experience at university? (5marks)**

    _____

    _____

    _____

7. **How does the guest speaker feel about herself now? Why do you think she feels this way now? (3 marks)**

    _____

    _____

Appendix P: Group Presentations

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮ 243

Study Skill Seminars and ESL Workshops

During this semester, you must attend ONE seminar or workshop. You must take

notes during the seminar or workshop. In Weeks 7 - 10 you will present (in groups) an

overview of what you learned to the class. I will give you more details about this later.

Below are the topics and schedule. Please sign up for the topic, date and time slot you

prefer. NOT MORE THAN 3 STUDENTS PER TOPIC.   YOU MUST REGISTER

FOR THE SEMINAR OR WORKSHOP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

REGISTER AT THE LEARNING CENTRE.

TOPIC	DATE	TIME	SIGN UP
1. Never Enough Time: How to manage your time effectively	**Monday Jan 21 Room 1320**	**10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**	
2. Group work: How to work effectively in groups	**Monday Jan 28 Room 1320**	**10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**	
3. Do your notes make sense: How to improve your note-taking skills	**Monday Feb 4 Room 1320**	**10:00 – 11:30 a.m.**	

4. Yikes! Exams already: How to prepare effectively for exams	**Thursday Feb 14** **Room 1320**	**2:00 – 3:30 p.m.**	
6. Learning from the WWW	**Tuesday Jan 29** **Room 1810**	**11:00 a.m.**	
7. Collocations: The secret tool for success	**Tuesday Feb 12** **Room 1810**	**11:00 a.m.**	
8. Speed Reading: Faster and faster	**Tuesday Feb 26** **Room 1810**	**11:00 a.m.**	

Appendix Q: Problem-posing: Hijab Situation

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST: ███ 243

Problem-posing

A young high school student is a devout Muslim. She wears a traditional *hijab* to class. In her gym class, her teacher asks her to remove it. She refuses. The teacher expels her from the class. The student is very upset. She tells her parents she doesn't want to go back to this class.

Work in small groups. Answer the following questions (in note form) on chart . Choose one person from the group to present to the class.

1. **Background Knowledge: What relevant information do you have about this problem?**

2. **Rights: State whose rights are involved and identify their rights.**

3. **Obligations: State whose obligations are involved and what these are.**

4. **Values: What values are you using to guide your decision? How do they affect all the participants?**

5. **Final decision: What are the possible ways the school might deal with this situation?**

Adapted from Matthews (1994). Speaking Solutions, (pp. 83- 102) New Jersey. Prentice Hall

Appendix R: Homework: Weekend Log

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▇ 243

Weekend Listening and Speaking Log

Over the next four days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday) I would like you to keep a listening and speaking log in which you record every occasion in which you spoke or listened to English. You must write the date, time and how long you spent and some details about it. Here are some suggestions for ways you can maximize your English listening and speaking experiences over the next four days.

EVENT	DATE - TIME	LENGTH OF TIME

Conversations:
  - with a tutor in Learning Centre
  - with a friend
  - homestay family
  - stranger
  - classmate
  - shop assistant
  - cashier in bank, supermarket, etc.		

Movie:		

TV/radio:
  - Sitcoms
  - drama
  - news		

Entertainment:
  - nightclub
  - casino
  - pub		

Home Video		

Playing sport:
  - gym
  - basketball
  - other		

At work		

On this page, write the details of your activities.   Use more paper if you need to.

EVENT	DETAILS

Appendix S: Final Listening Exam

<div align="right">Instructor: Wendy Royal</div>

Course: ELST ███ 243

The Distorted Mirror

Hoppenrath, C. and Royal, W. (1997) *The World Around Us: Canadian Social Issues for ESL Students*

Today's news events are told through the mass media – television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. These stories tell us who we are, and what is happening in our lives, locally, and around the world. The mass media uses various techniques, sometimes on-location cameras, sometimes dramatization, to show us scenes about the real world. But whose reality are we seeing?

Stories are shaped to be the most appealing, to grab and hold the attention of an audience. The "facts" in a story depend on who tell it. Why did the writers choose this particular topic? How knowledgeable are they on the subject? What is their perspective? What questions do they ask? And how is the information selected?

Obviously television's main appeal is its visual aspect. Stories, therefore, are chosen if they have lots of action scenes. Emotional appeal is another key ingredient for any story, whether a news item, a drama, or a documentary.

The media doesn't only slant current events. Have you ever wondered why certain events in your history books are included and other left out? Do you learn more about the powerful than you do about the working class? Do you get the viewpoint of the ordinary people and minority groups, or the viewpoints of the dominant class and culture?

North America's dominant culture is the white middle class. This group in our society holds the power in the media world. Therefore, you will get the news and entertainment

from their perspectives. This is necessary in order to keep ratings high. High ratings are important in order to earn maximum dollars for advertisers.

To understand human events, it is important to look at different sources. This helps to give a different perspective and richer understanding of what really happened at a certain event. The same holds true in modern media. When getting information from the media, both students and teachers need to be open-minded and seek out various mainstream and alternative sources.

For example, do you know that Canada has a network of First Nations newspapers, radio and TV stations? Native-written news stories provide a broader cultural insight into aboriginal issues than the mainstream media.

Why do we watch certain television shows? What is their appeal? What values are they communicating, perhaps without us realizing? An analysis of the media helps us figure out how news, dramas, sitcoms, game shows and so on grab and hold our attention.

The first step of this analysis is to identify what keeps our attention. This includes types of camera angles, frequency of camera changes, type and loudness of music, and verbal, physical, or emotional violence on the screen. These are jolts of different information, laughter, and surprises. They are timed to occur just before commercial breaks. The idea is to alert the viewer more to the real business of television: advertising.

The second step is analyzing the hidden messages or values that are communicated. For example, how are minority groups and women stereotyped in the media?

The media is a powerful influence on our lives, attitudes, and knowledge. When it presents only one view of events, it gives us a distorted image of reality. It is up to us to restore the balance by seeking out alternative sources of information.

Appendix T: Role Play

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ▮▮▮ 243

Role Play: Car Accident (adapted from Morgan, B. (1998) *The ESL Classroom: Teaching critical practice and community development)*

Procedure:
1. **Assign roles to each member in your group.**

2. **Brainstorm ideas in your group to support your position.**

3. **Develop your own argument, making sure you have**
     - **A well-defined opinion**
     - **A reason for your opinion**
     - **Some supporting evidence e.g. examples; explanation; statistical data; expert opinion**

    This will require some basic research e.g. newspapers, internet.

4. **Meet with your group again to practice your role play.**

5. **Make a group decision and be prepared to give reasons for your decision.**

6. **You will perform the role play in class on _____ Time limit: 10 minutes**

    Linda Chow is a landed immigrant.   Although her English is good, she still feels uncomfortable talking to strangers. Recently she was rear ended by another car while waiting at a red traffic light and her car was badly damaged. The other driver, John Smith, wanted to forget the whole thing, claiming Linda's car was too old. John told Linda they didn't need to call the police, but Linda insisted. When the police arrived, the other driver, John, ran over to the police officer and told his side of the story. But when Linda wanted to tell hers, the police officer said it wasn't necessary because it wasn't her fault.   When Linda went to her insurance company, they were surprised the police officer hadn't taken a statement or issued the other driver with a ticket. Now Linda thinks she was the victim of discrimination. She has been very upset by the incident. What should she do?

Appendix U: Guest Speaker: Youth PrideSpeak Workshop

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Evaluation Form

I would very much like to get your feedback on the workshop.   **There are no right or wrong answers, so please just answer as you think/feel.**   You do not have to write your name. Please return it to me next Tuesday.

1.   What did you think of the workshop? Circle the word or words that describe your reaction.

Interesting	useful	boring	too difficult	shocking	not useful

2. Please explain your reaction i.e. Why did you think/feel the way you did?

3. Do you think it's important to discuss these kinds of issues in an ESL class? Give reasons for your answers.

4. Did the guest speaker's workshop give you a better understanding of what it is like to be homosexual? Please explain.

5. Has your attitude to homosexuals changed as a result of the workshop ? Please explain.

6. Did you discuss the workshop with anyone outside of class e.g

   - your husband/ partner   - other family members   - friends in Vancouver

   - friends or family in your country (by email, MSN etc)

   If so, how did they react?

   What language did you use to discuss this issue with them?

7. Any final thoughts

Appendix V: Problem-posing: Bullying

Instructor: Wendy Royal

Course: ELST ███ 243

 As a group, consider the following situation and the discussion question(s):

A Grade 10 student wears a pink shirt to school. His class mates make fun of him in the school grounds, - laughing, pointing fingers and shouting derogatory remarks, such as 'gay' or 'faggot'. Work together in small groups to find possible ways the school might deal with the situation, looking at the rights, obligations and values of all those involved.

Discussion: What are the possible ways the school might deal with the situation?

Appendix W: Behavioural Research Ethics Board – Certificate of Approval

UBC The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:	UBC BREB NUMBER:
Kogila Adam-Moodley	UBC/Education/Educational Studies	H07-01342

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

Institution	Site
N/A	N/A

Other locations where the research will be conducted:
classroom, library study room at ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):
Patricia Duff
Wendy A. Royal
Steven Talmy

SPONSORING AGENCIES:
N/A

PROJECT TITLE:
Students' conceptions and experiences of critical language pedagogy in a multicultural ESL academic preparation class.

REB MEETING DATE:	CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:
August 9, 2007	August 9, 2008

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:	DATE APPROVED: August 30, 2007	
Document Name	**Version**	**Date**
Protocol:		
Research proposal	8 June 2007	June 8, 2007
Consent Forms:		
Consent Form 2 August 2007	20 August 2007	August 20, 2007
Consent Form 1 August 2007	20 august 2007	August 20, 2007
Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:		
Appendix E: Interview guidelines revised	20 august 2007	August 20, 2007
Letter of Initial Contact:		
Letter of Contact	8 June 2007	June 8, 2007
Other Documents:		
Course Outline:ELST 0283	N/A	June 11, 2007

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board
and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair