

**Exploring ESL immigrant students' perceptions of their
academic and social integration success**

By

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Abstract

This study introduces a different kind of collaborative research whereby two researchers co-design and co-conduct the research and draw their own conclusions from the shared data. The data, gathered using qualitative tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, was further enriched as a result of having two individuals from different backgrounds interpreting the data. The data collected from 14 university students who were once identified as ESL students in British Columbia, Canada, were transcribed then analyzed using NUD*IST qualitative computer software. The focus was on their perceptions of ESL programs, immigration process, and socio-cultural factors that contributed to their academic and social integration success.

Participants' own words centered mostly on their relationships with families, friends, and ESL teachers as major factors contributing to their success. ESL programs served as their safety nets as the majority suggested that their journey into social and academic mainstreams had undesirable effects on their experiences. Three major factors were identified as having both helped and hindered their adaptation and integration into Canadian school and society: family influence, bicultural identities, and segregation.

Results from this study suggest a number of theoretical and practical implications. First, this study need to be replicated in different contexts using a longitudinal approach to document how immigrant ESL students construct their experiences within and outside of school overtime. Secondly, research need to aim at understanding the tension between students' home and school cultures and encourage involvement and collaboration between ESL students, parents, and teachers. In addition, examining how ESL students

interact with their mainstream counterparts may provide helpful guidelines for schools to foster an environment whereby unity and support exist between the two groups.

This study concludes with both researchers' reflection on each other's thesis. This step led to a critical reexamination of their interpretation. Differences and similarities emerged from this process. The similarities both researchers shared provided a greater degree of validity and reliability to this project. On the other hand, the differences that emerged served to enrich the data by providing two perspectives to the same problem.

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Exploring ESL immigrant students' perceptions of their academic and social integration success

Chapter One

Introduction

Statement of the problem

It has been reported that ESL (English as a second language) immigrant students in Vancouver, British Columbia's school system are dropping out at an alarming rate (Gunderson & Clarke, 1998). This finding calls for great concern because ESL immigrant students comprise a large percentage of the school population. According to a school trustee, 52% students or 30,754 of 59,210 students in a major metropolitan area in British Columbia are ESL learners (Vancouver Sun, Dec. 3, 1997). As immigrants from various parts of the world, these students represent vastly diverse socio-cultural backgrounds that make up the social mosaic. The emergence of widened cultural diversity results in a greater complexity in the relationship between language and culture. ESL instructors are faced with the extremely difficult task of integrating students of different linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds into a society that is itself culturally diverse. Students' struggle to integrate in turn often leads to poor academic performance because the degree to which immigrant students are able to adjust to a new society and culture is one of the critical factors in their academic success.

However, in the midst of this discouraging situation, there are ESL immigrant students who have overcome great adversities and have successfully entered post-secondary institutions. Little is known about how these students are able to succeed in

school, while the majority of their peers fail or drop-out. There is a need for research that explores issues relating to successful ESL immigrant students. Systematic research will offer insights into successful students' effective strategies that enable them to succeed. This exploration will assist second language researchers and practitioners in determining whether or not successful students' strategies might be useful in improving the current situation in the system.

Background of the study

It has been argued that language is acquired and understood with reference to its cultural and social meaning (Gunderson, 2000; Heath, 1985; Norton-Peirce 1995; Poole, 1992). Conversely, we negotiate meaning and understand concepts of our society and culture through the use of language. These notions are well articulated in a theoretical framework called language socialization, which suggests that linguistic activities are "socially organized and embedded in cultural systems of meaning" (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a, p.164). Children gradually learn a language and culture in a social context through engaging in language-mediated interaction and activity. Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a) assert that social contact occurs at the moment of birth. As soon as a newborn arrives in this world he or she participates in conversational activities with caregivers. Bi-directional communication takes place as caregivers speculate about the needs of the newborn and fulfill the needs accordingly until the crying stops. Without specific instructions, the newborn gradually learns the effectiveness of crying as a communication tool.

ESL immigrant students' process of integration and socialization into a foreign land is like that of a newborn arriving in the world. That is, in a matter of one plane ride, they exit the womb of their mother country and are delivered to a new world in which nearly everything is unrecognizable and incomprehensible. The plane landing is similar to the cutting of the umbilical cord; it is the pronouncement that the newborn is to reside in the new world. Crawling back into the mother's womb is no longer an option. Following the realization that they are here to stay, immigrant students search and hope for someone to come along and help make sense of their new circumstances and surroundings. Like newborns, they long to be embraced by a pair of warm, loving hands. They desire to nestle in nurturing arms, where the socialization process takes place - like a mother with a child, her soft, cheerful song elicits a smile, while a frustrated angry tone evokes tears. Through this interaction a strong emotional and psychological bond formulates and the newborn learns how to obtain affection and care. This is the kind of interaction and care that is desperately needed to ease the pain in ESL immigrants' socialization and integration processes in a foreign land.

I too am an immigrant. At the age of 11, I boarded a 747 that flew me from Taiwan to the United States. My "honeymoon" period in the new world came to an abrupt end when my parents decided to "abandon" me for seven hours each day. Each morning a yellow prisoner bus would transport me from our apartment to a place where I would become a museum display for a different kind of species to look at and play with - a place they called school. I arrived in a town with population of 30,000 and only two other Asian families. Being the only Asian student in the school with no English language skills and very little knowledge of my new socio-cultural surroundings, I

became a newborn again; I needed to be cared for at every moment. I could only learn through modeling and reinforcement. For example I learned to always walk to the lunchroom when the bell sounded and to line up when my teacher blew the whistle after recess. Unable to participate in many meaningful socio-cultural and academic activities, I needed my teacher and peers to be near me so I could model them. Thankfully, I did receive their support. Strange as it may sound, being the subject of the class's daily anthropological study proved to be a significant factor in my language socialization process. That is, my peers were all intrigued by "the boy from China", (sometimes from Japan, depending on what they observed from movies and television). I was bombarded with countless questions everyday about Ninjas and Bruce Lee. I was invited to many birthday parties so their neighbors could see "the Chinese boy". Their constant attention became a great comfort and support. I was engaged socially and culturally. As time passed, my linguistic skills improved while simultaneously I became "one of them" by assimilation, although I remained different.

The recollection of my own experiences and the current situation in the school system prompted me to pursue this study. My experience reminds me of the inevitable bullying and peer pressure that school-age students face. But for ESL immigrant students, what is more difficult is that they face the same struggles with very little linguistic and socialization skills. Subsequently, their struggles take place in the midst of a dominant culture and discourses that they may not ever claim as their own. Despite the seemingly ineffectiveness of the system, there are those who have prevailed and successfully entered a university. Both researchers of this study believe ESL students' successful rate and current ESL systems can be improved by learning from those who

have succeeded. The experiences of the successful students are significant pieces to the complex puzzle of successful second language pedagogy and practice. Therefore, this study sought out the features of success in order to discover ways of helping ESL immigrant students adapt to the realities of their new world. It was also the goal of this study to draw ESL instructors and parents' attention to the trepidation that grips these students as they enter a new environment and find ways of providing ESL immigrant students the appropriate care to help them succeed.

Purpose of the study

Little research has been conducted to understand ESL students' academic and social experiences in the Canadian context (Early, 1992; Gunderson, 2000; Gunderson & Clarke, 1998; Piper, 1985; Watt, Roessingh, Bosetti, 1996). The purpose of this study was to explore former ESL students' perceptions of the socio-cultural factors having influenced their academic success as defined by their ability to enter a Canadian university. This qualitative study was co-conducted by two researchers. The purpose of this joint research was to understand how socio-cultural factors influenced researchers' interpretation of the findings. In order to conduct this exploration, this ethnographic study employed the theoretical framework of language socialization developed by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a, 1986b).

Very little research in the field of second language has explored the relationship between language and socio-cultural factors in successful immigrant students' process of integration and academic performance (Watts Pailliotet, 1997; Willett, 1995). Students' academic success can be determined by the degree in which they are able to understand

and integrate into a society and culture. As stated by Freire and Macedo (1987), "[reading] the world always precedes reading the word" (p. 35). For ESL immigrant students, the new society and culture that surround them are merely individual bits and pieces of a puzzle that they struggle to make sense of and put together. Their success is mainly determined by their ability to put together the fragmented pieces of the puzzle. It was the goal of this study to explore how successful ESL immigrant students perceived their world and understand the degree in which their world influenced their academic success. This study also examined the common academic approaches of successful ESL students- how they studied and what techniques were used.

In addition to understanding ESL students' perceptions, this study also examined the differences and similarities of different researchers' perceptions of the same topic. In the field of second language acquisition, almost no research has focused on comparing the influences of different researchers' backgrounds on the analysis and interpretations of research data. Both researchers believe that in conducting this research, different interpretations of the same data will result as each researcher brings his personal socio-cultural background into the study.

This study was co-conducted by Louis Chen and Jérémie Séror, Master of Arts candidates in the department of Language and Literacy Education. Both co-investigators have gathered and are sharing the same data and similar literature; however, each co-investigator pursued different aspects of the same issue (immigrant ESL students at UBC). We hope that this kind of co-operative research will lead to a greater understanding of the issues being studied, as well as ensure validity in the findings and interpretations, by providing two different perspectives of the same problem.

Significance of the study

If ESL immigrant students received the aforementioned nurture and care, we would not see the kind of increasing dropout rates and the decreasing academic performance in British Columbia. The dropout rate is alarming. As Gunderson (in press) reported, currently in the Vancouver school system, the dropout rate of English language learners (ELL), most of whom are immigrant students, ranges from 30% to 95% in various schools. The overall average of 60% of ELL in Vancouver will *not* graduate from high school. Clearly, English language learners presently in the system are far from successful. Therefore, instructors and researchers must question the effectiveness of the current ESL programs, programs which are designed to help students acquire the necessary linguistic skills in order to integrate socio-culturally and succeed academically. It is essential that more research be conducted to identify the factors that contribute to the bleakness of the current situation.

It is clear that language, society, and culture, cannot function as individual entities (Ben-Rafael, 1994; Freire & Macedo, 1987), it can be said that socio-cultural factors (or the lack of), are contributing factors to the current situation in the ESL programs. By socio-cultural factors, this study suggests that in addition to ESL immigrant students' home, school, and social environments, the nurture and care by ESL instructors is also vital in offering these students the necessary socio-cultural knowledge to comprehend the contextual meaning of the English language. Reciprocally, it is through contextualized linguistic knowledge that students socialize and integrate. Thus, by understanding former ESL students' perceptions, this study sheds light into ways in which ESL instructors and parents may recognize the linguistic, social, and cultural struggles immigrant students

face and offer them the necessary assistance in order to succeed in their new environments.

Research Questions

It is hoped that this research has begun to identify ways in which teachers, schools, parents and fellow ESL immigrant students can help ESL immigrant students achieve the goal of integrating into Canadian culture and attending university. The study investigated the following four questions:

1. What do university students once identified as ESL students who have successfully entered a Canadian university have in common?
2. What do university students once identified as ESL students identify as factors having helped or hindered their adaptation and integration into Canadian society?
3. How do factors identified by these students contribute to their academic and social integration success?
4. What advice do university students once identified as ESL students have for teachers, parents, and other ESL students?

Outline of the thesis

Chapter two of this thesis discusses the framework of language socialization in detail and reviews some of the literature related to these questions. Chapter three focuses on the rationale behind this kind of co-operative, ethnographic research and explains in detail how data were gathered, interpreted and analyzed. Chapter four thesis tells about the stories of the informants in this study as interpreted by this researcher. In chapter

five, the researcher examines the emerging themes from the stories of the informants and discusses how the language socialization framework worked and is working in the lives of the informants. In addition, the researcher summarizes the findings and discusses their implications in ESL classrooms. Chapter six compares and discusses both researchers' interpretations of the findings. We examine how our personal backgrounds affect our perceptions and interpretations of the data. It is an opportunity for both researchers to critique each other's interpretations. This thesis will conclude with an epilogue composed by both researchers to evaluate the pros and cons of co-operative research and discuss each other's view on the findings and the process of this research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This study focused on understanding former ESL students' perceptions of the socio-cultural factors having influenced their academic success. Questions in this study were examined using the framework of existing research from different fields including language education, critical pedagogy, sociolinguistics, and psychology. This literature review is organized into the following categories: 1) socio-cultural identity, 2) social theory in education, 3) language socialization. Although the literature review is not exhaustive, these three areas provide the theoretical background for this study.

Language socialization and second language learning

The concept of language socialization considers learning language and socio-cultural practices as an interconnected processes. Developed by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a, 1986b), this theory proposes that language learning takes place during interactions with an individual's environment. Ochs (1988) asserts that meanings and functions of a language are socially and culturally embedded, while socio-cultural understanding is negotiated through the use of language. The process of language learning involves two simultaneous processes - gaining linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge at the same time. Socialization, therefore, implies interaction between learners and their environment (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b).

Research in the field of second language learning has been conducted using the framework of language socialization (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Poole, 1992; Willett, 1995).

These studies highlight the interdependent factors of social context learning, cultural learning, and language learning in the socialization process. Language learning is deeply connected to the process of socialization, while the process of becoming a competent member of a society is, to a large extent, through acquiring language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a). The process of language learning and socialization undoubtedly has a profound affect on the academic success of immigrant students. The focus on the inseparability of language and culture makes language socialization a particularly useful framework for this study because it enables the examination of socio-cultural factors that affect students' academic success. The following section of the literature review summarizes different studies that suggest the interconnectedness of the processes of learning language and culture in social contexts.

Studies by Poole (1992), Willet (1995), and Duff & Uchida (1997) support the notion that second language learning and socio-cultural integration are intertwined. In addition, these studies demonstrate that second language classrooms constitute a powerful context of socialization in a new environment. The language socialization framework was employed to examine the kind of cultural messages a second language teacher conveys through classroom interaction. Specifically, Poole's study examined how classroom discourse represents the cultural norms and beliefs with respect to teachers' accommodation of students' competence and results. Poole's data suggests that teachers' language behaviors are, indeed, culturally motivated and, therefore, in second language learning, cultural dimensions affect instruction and the learning processes.

The profound affect of the classroom on the socialization process is also evident in Willett and Duff & Uchida's studies where these authors demonstrated how the socio-

cultural context the of classroom, community and society shape teachers' identities and ESL children's linguistic, social, and academic competence. These ethnographic studies examined the interactional routines and strategies in L2 learning. Both authors described how teachers and students' interactional routines are shaped by social contexts. These factors enable teachers and L2 students to interact, establish relationships with one another, and to display their competency that is recognizable to their teachers. These studies suggest that competence is jointly constructed leading to language development and increased social status in the classroom.

Socio-cultural, political, and socio-economic factors in education

Other studies have taken a closer look at the inseparability of language and culture in the social context. It is evident through research that comprehension of language (oral and written language) is as much about experience with the worlds of home, school, and work as it is about words (Alvermann, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 2001; Gunderson, 2000; Heath, 1983; Kirk, 2001). These educators agree that language and literacy education is less about skill development, but more about access to socio-cultural resources and understanding. Taking a page from work in cognitive psychology, Gee (2001) states that meaning in language is tied to people's experiences of situated action in the social world. The perceptions, feelings and interactions are stored as dynamic images in the mind. Thus, language learners must socialize into the language discourse that integrates language, beliefs, and values in order for their language learning experience to be socially situated and meaningful. It should be expected that this process takes place most visibly in the classroom, however, research has suggested otherwise

(Bourdieu, Passeron, Saint Martin 1994; Delpit, 1995; Gunderson, 2000; Knobel, 2001; Tett, 2000). In their critique of academic discourse, Delpit (1995) and Bourdieu et al. (1994) bring attention to the linguistic misunderstanding between instructors and students as a result of a divorce between the language and culture of home and school. In the classroom where the language use contrasts greatly with the language of everyday life, academic language only serves to alienate students and reinforce the feeling that the education system belongs to another world. These notions coincide with the findings by Knobel (2001) and Tett (2000) which revealed that teachers often make assumptions and efforts to build upon students' home literacy experiences with very little idea of what actually happens in their home culture. Gunderson (2000) warns, "if secondary teachers do not take an interest in students' languages and cultures, ESL students will continue to fail to learn" (p. 692).

Factors outside of school also contribute to students' socialization process and academic achievement. One of the most apparent factors of influence in students' success is their socio-economic backgrounds. Students of lower socio-economic status are reported to have lower levels of school achievement than their socio-economically advantaged counterparts (Dhesi, 2000; Gunderson, 2000, in press; Valdes, 1998). Financial capital plays a major role in children's education achievement because limited material resources may limit the alternatives families have to help their children succeed academically and socially. In Gunderson's study (in press), students from "entrepreneurial" class families fared better than those that entered Canada as refugees. It was reported that those from "entrepreneurial" families often sought help outside of

school, whereas refugee families could not afford other alternatives due to financial restraints.

In addition to classroom and socio-economic factors discussed thus far, socio-political factors also occupy an important role in students' academic achievement. It has been said that literacy is more than just learning to read and write, it is a political act (Apple, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1989; Giroux, 1996; Macedo, 1994). Educators have argued against the inevitable political nature of the educational process. In light of this view, some educators suggest that the current system serves to protect the dominant class. Apple (1996) urges his readers to think about how education is profoundly implicated in the politics of culture by stating that curriculum is always a selection of someone or some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is inevitable that this knowledge is produced out of a cultural, political, and economic agenda belonging to those with power in society while other groups' knowledge are hardly considered. Freire and Macedo (1987) question "*in favor of whom and what (and thus against whom and what) do we promote education?*" (p. 38, italics original), while Macedo (1994) in a more forthright fashion, criticizes conservative educators for competency-based curricula, arguing that this approach creates class ethnocentrism which benefits the white and upper-class students and hence exacerbating the existing equity gap that victimizes students of secondary status in terms of linguistic, socio-economic and socio-cultural status (Apple, 1996; Delpit, 1995). One way of ensuring the equity gap is by using "polished" academic language of the cultivated classes, which contrasts greatly with the working class language, thereby denying culturally marginalized students access to the culture of the elite (Bourdieu et al., 1994). Educators must understand the ways in which

different dialects encode different world views. Linguistic code not only reflects student reality, but also their lived experience in a given historical moment. Education must therefore offer minority students opportunities to be affirmed of their experiences and culture through access to the language and knowledge contained in the dominant curriculum (Giroux, 1996).

Social-cultural identity

The result of social and political pressure applied upon the students often has a profound influence on their identities, thereby affecting academic performance. According to Ogbu (1995, 1992), within a group of minority students, the way in which they overcome cultural and language problems differs. He suggests that immigrant and voluntary students are more successful in dealing with cultural and language problems compared to involuntary students (those that are nonimmigrant secondary status students). This is because voluntary and involuntary students encounter similar problems with different interpretations and responses to the problem. For instance, in the case of voluntary students, cultural differences already existed prior to their arrival in the new country. Students are, therefore, aware of the differences without perceiving them as oppositional and threatening to their first cultures. Subsequently voluntary students perceive learning the dominant culture and language as adding to their own, which would enable them to succeed.

Involuntary students on the other hand, interpret the cultural and language differences as markers of their collective identity to be maintained, not as barriers to be overcome. They fear that learning other cultural frames of reference will lead to their

identity loss. Moreover, involuntary students believe that success in school may not translate to advancement equal to that of those belonging to the dominant class. Goldstein (1995) and Matute-Bianchi's (1986) work demonstrates the pressure of having to choose between two worlds. In the case of Goldstein's subjects, the use of English in an environment occupied mostly by speakers of the subject's first language may have jeopardized friendships and support networks that are built around ethnic identity through language choice.

In her study, Matute-Bianchi reveals that Chicanos appear to resist certain features of the school culture, especially the behavioral patterns required for scholastic achievement. According to the study, adopting the dominant "White" cultural features are efforts that are perceived to be acts of betrayal of one's history and culture. Thus students are forced to choose between being a Chicano or doing well in school. It is not possible to participate in both the cultures of the dominant group and the Chicano culture.

The pressure to belong to a certain group and the issue of socio-cultural identity are an emerging theme among Asian Americans writers (Liu, 1998; Tuan, 1998; Yep, 1998; Yuen, 2001; Zia, 2000). This literature is of particular importance to this study because all participants were of Asian background; hence this section of the literature review sheds light into issues of belonging and identity that plague many second generation Asians in North America. Liu (1998) speak of the complexity and confusion an individual may experience by possessing two distinctively different cultures within:

...like so many other Asian Americans of the second-generation, I find myself now the bearer of a strange new status: white, by acclamation. I am of the mainstream. In many ways I fit the psychological profile of the so-called banana: imitative, impressionable, rootless, eager to please...(p.35-36).

Socializing into a culture that is seemingly opposed to students' ethnic experiences forces immigrant students to adopt and adapt to new cultural and ethnic identities (Tuan, 1998). Due to this difference, they must learn to inhabit at least two cultures and languages. It is through this process that identities are constantly produced and reproduced (Hall, 1995). The degree to which students are able to cope with this change inevitably affects and reflects students' perceptions about becoming "real" Canadians.

Some researchers and theorists in this area attribute the difficulty of acculturation mainly to the cultural differences that divide the East from the West. Zia (2000) and Tuan (1998) trace the history of Asian immigrants into United States, exposing injuries of racism suffered by generations of Asian immigrants as a result of cultural misunderstanding. Yuen (2001) and Yep (1998) suggest that differences in culture are mainly due to Confucian teaching that permeates Asian thoughts and life. Guided by Confucian teaching of filial piety, individuals from Asian cultures regard duty as the highest motive for decision making. In contrast, decision making in the western culture is based on individual self-actualization. The differences in cultural priority create a tension in students' identities as they find themselves torn between their responsibilities to family and to themselves.

Parental expectations often serve to minimize a student's identity. That is, immigrant parents hold to values that differ considerably from their westernized children. Consequently, immigrant parents and their children often communicate in different languages linguistically and contextually. Asian immigrant parents often demand that their children achieve outstanding grades, be accepted by a reputable university (often one that is well known by the Asian community), and secure a high-status, high-paying

job. In addition to these requirements, immigrant children are also expected to retain their cultural values. Governed by a deep undercurrent of Confucian philosophy, immigrant students often place themselves under severe pressure to uphold the filial piety, while struggling to legitimize themselves in a new culture that encourages the pursuit of "freedom, liberty, and happiness". Zia (2001) offers an example of parents arranging marriages for their children, highlighting the tension of being between the paradoxical demand to succeed in the mainstream, while retaining the opposing traditional cultural values.

Other factors contributing to the difficulty of negotiating an identity for immigrants may be the issue of insecurity. Seeing through the lens of psychology, Ishiyama (1989) suggests that without an environment in which psychological and physical needs are met, students may experience insecurity whereby they become hesitant to speak due to the fear of making linguistic errors or speaking with an accent. This is inextricably linked to the issue of self-worth and acceptance. Ishiyama explains that self-identity serves as a primary reference point in validating the acceptability of one's self. When insecurity arises, students feel inferior and excluded at the fundamental level of social functioning. Furthermore, the feeling of insecurity may affect their skills to communicate and develop relationships. Underdeveloped socio-cultural competence and autonomy in a new environment can limit the opportunities for self-validation. These issues have profound affects on the formation and development of identity. When entering a new environment, the loss of status, role confusion (change in power relation), and social exclusion all become important concerns. People become subjected to the

power of group norms. Hence, social approval and integration become essential elements to success in the new environment.

Research has shown that many immigrants are able to adapt to a bicultural lifestyle (Bosher, 1995; Norton, 1997; Norton-Peirce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2001). Norton credits immigrants' integration success to individual "investment" in their social identities; a concept that captures the complex relationship of language learners to their social history and multiple desires. According to Norton, as learners invest in a second language, they realize that "they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (1995, p. 17). In this view, language learners construct their identities through exchanging social and cultural information using language. Hence, identity constructs and is constructed by language (Leung, Harris, and Rampton, 1997). Drawing from Bordieu, Norton also asserts that it is through language that a person gains, or is denied, access to powerful social networks that provide the person with the power to speak. This notion implies that competence is partly gaining the right to speak and overcoming unequal relationships. Bourdieu (1977), suggests language learners may never consider themselves as legitimate speakers if they cannot claim ownership of the target language. It is, therefore, evident that the right to speak is a source of empowerment, and empowerment through language is the key for individuals to negotiate their identity (Cummins, 1996).

Conclusion

In order to understand the influence of socio-cultural factors on former ESL students' perceptions of their academic success, this study looked at students' diverse

cultural, educational, economic backgrounds. This includes literature that focuses on: how language is acquired within a particular socio-cultural context; the affects of discrepancy between students' daily home language and school language; the influence of cultural politics in education; social influences that guide students' perception of their circumstances and identity; and how identities are constructed and re-constructed in conjunction with the process of learning a language and culture.

Missing from this literature review are studies that examine the connection between immigrant ESL students' academic achievement and the influence of socio-cultural factors. More research is needed to examine these issues through students' own perspective. In doing so, researchers may be better able to conceptualize the relationship between immigrant ESL students and their social world. The understanding of the relationship between language learning and the socio-cultural factors of influence may reveal the keys to help immigrant students in their language socialization process and academic achievement. Therefore, this study sought to understand former ESL students' perceptions of the socio-cultural factors that influenced their academic success and their learning of the language and culture of Canada.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Context

This chapter explains the methodology employed in this study and the rationale behind its use. It describes the design of this joint research, the process of participant selection, data collection, data analysis, as well as the limitations of the research design.

Multi-perspective research

One of the unique features of this study was its collaborative design. Through this project, we introduced a different style of collaborative research we call "multi-perspective research". Unlike many research projects that are conducted by two or more researchers with one shared finding, this collaborative research differs in that the two researchers report their individual interpretations of the findings that are derived from shared literature and data. Numerous benefits are associated with this kind of collaborative approach; one significant reason being that this kind of collaborative research brings together the research community. This research design encourages researchers to pool their knowledge and resources, opening up lines of communication where resources are shared and ideas are challenged during every step of the research. In addition to increasing communication, it ensures a more careful and thorough research effort, providing a greater degree of validity and reliability. Finally, collaborative research does not imply less individual responsibility. Conversely, working collaboratively requires greater effort; covering more resources, ideas, and perspectives.

It is hoped that more research in education will be conducted using this approach in the future.

During the construction of this project, we shared the responsibility of the literature search, recruitment of participants, gathering participant information, interviews, and transcription of interview data. Information was shared only up to the step of data transcription. Upon accomplishing the shared responsibilities, we began keeping conversations pertaining to the research to a minimal. Analyses were done separately and our findings were not disclosed until analyses and five chapters of the theses were completed. Once the analysis and the writing of the chapters were completed, the work for chapters six and seven (the comparison and critique of researchers' analysis) began. For the last step of this project, we shared and compared findings and interpretations. This step was designed to meet a part of the purpose of this research. That is, we were interested in understanding how our own backgrounds affected the interpretation of data. This approach also allowed us to examine how we each arrived at our understanding of the data and reflected on our own interpretations through another's perspective. By examining the relationship between our backgrounds and findings, we were able to validate our results and discover together the information that we might have missed alone.

Qualitative interviewing approach

The main purpose of this study was to explore former ESL students' language socialization practices. More specifically, this study focused on understanding former ESL students' perceptions of the socio-cultural factors having influenced their academic

success. This study was conducted using qualitative interviewing approach (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) in order to acquire a rich understanding of students' experiences and backgrounds that had shaped their perceptions.

Qualitative interviewing provides the opportunity for researchers to reconstruct events that they have not participated in and understand directly from students what they think and feel about their experiences (Palys, 1997). That is, qualitative interviewers dialogue and interact with interviewees through guided questions pertaining to interviewees' worlds. In this approach, researchers introduce the topic, then guide the discussions by asking specific questions. Interviewees are considered as conversation partners rather than as objects of research and, therefore, respond to questions as they would in normal conversations. Questions and answers logically follow each other as interviewers and interviewees take turns talking. Interviewers listen to each answer and determine the next question based on what was said. Interviewers and the interviewees share equal responsibility in maintaining the flow of dialogue. Although the interview is initiated and guided by researchers' questions, interviewees can legitimately take over the direction of the interview. Interviewees may take control of the interview by changing the subject, guiding the tempo, or indicating the appropriateness of interview questions. Together researchers and interviewees work to provide the detail description that builds toward an overall picture by deciding what issues to explore deeper and suggest what should remain unsaid. This approach enables interviewers to tap into interviewees' background and their experiences in the evolving social and cultural world through what is said; but equally important, valuable information also lies within the nonverbal cues that also indicate emphasis and emotional tone. Listening to interviewees' own cultural

language and perceptions provides researchers greater depth of insight into reasons behind the existing research problem and possible solutions to the problem.

Within qualitative interviewing, there are two categories: *cultural* and *topical interviews*. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), *cultural interviews* probe for the special and shared meanings of a particular group. Information is received through examples and stories that reveal how people understand their worlds and what values and beliefs they hold. This type of interview is often conducted through a combination of stories and narratives. The researcher reports the ideas, expressions, and beliefs that are conveyed through the interviewee's past experiences.

Contrary to *cultural interviews*, *topical interviews* focus on the explanation of specific events and descriptions of processes. This type of interview focuses on detailed factual information pertaining to a specific topic. Interviewees for *topical interviews* are also more precisely defined. The nature of this type of interview requires the researcher to interpret what is said and reconstruct the narrative.

For the purpose of this study, both *cultural* and *topical interviews* were combined during the interviewing sessions. The research questions were directed specifically toward ESL immigrant students and asked students to recall their past through the more focused lenses of their immigration experiences and English socialization processes.

The in-person interview approach was suitable for the purpose of this study for the following reasons: The face-to-face dialogue enhanced the quality of the data; that is, the researchers were able to receive immediate feedback and clarify any misunderstandings and ambiguities (Palys, 1997). Moreover, this approach allowed the use of narrative to provide nuance and context of the issue. Narrative and stories were

essential to this study because "[we] create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for others about our own past actions, and we develop storied accounts that give sense to the behavior of others" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 14). The experiences and perceptions of the students in this study were best understood through their narratives. As stated by literary theorist Roland Barthes, "...the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives" (quoted in Polkinghorne, 1998 p. 14). People all have narratives that enable them to make sense of their surroundings and circumstances. And through narratives people also convey their shared beliefs and values; therefore, to meet the purpose of this study, it was essential for the researchers to listen carefully in order to explore the socio-cultural factors that were embedded in the students' narrative and stories.

Participants

Participants in this study involved university students who were once enrolled in ESL programs in the Greater Vancouver metropolitan area. Fourteen students and one student teacher participated in this study, representing five countries and six languages (see table 1). Criteria of eligibility for the study asked for students currently enrolled in the University of British Columbia (UBC). All eligible participants were non-native speakers of English and all were part of an ESL program in Greater Vancouver as a result of having arrived in Canada as immigrants. The researchers were interested in comparing the similarities and differences in the responses of the research questions between students to ensure a greater validity through different perspectives. The student-teacher

(Nansen) was excluded in this thesis because it was discovered during the interview that he did not attend ESL classes in the Greater Vancouver area. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary.

Upon receiving approval from UBC, recruitment notices were posted on UBC campus explaining the purposes of the study. Seventeen in total responded to the recruitment notices. All those who contacted the researchers were accepted to be a part of this study with the exception of two respondents who were excluded from the study due to their late responses. Each of the participants received a fifty-dollar honorarium for completing the interview.

In the initial stage of recruitment, the first respondents were female students. Of the nine respondents, seven were informed by recruitment notices, while two participants were informed about the study by their friends. Efforts were made by the researchers to invite male students to the study. Some recruitment notices were strategically placed in gentlemen's restrooms. Only one male participant and the student teacher responded to recruitment notices, while other male participants were informed about the study through various means. One of the researchers invited his friend to participate in the study. Another male participant was informed by his sister who also participated in the study. And lastly, one male participant was informed by his tutor, who is a colleague of both researchers at UBC.

It is worth noting that those who were eligible for this study represent only East Asian (Korean, Japanese, and Chinese) ethnic backgrounds. Students from these countries also represent a large percentage of entrepreneur and professional immigrant population (Gunderson, 2000; in press).

Table 1: Summary of Participants' Information

| Name | Country of origin | Age of arrival | Sex | Program | Degree |
|---------|-------------------|----------------|--------|-----------|-------------------|
| Beth | Japan | 5 | Female | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Celeste | Hong Kong | 8 | Female | Commerce | Undergraduate |
| Maia | China | 8.5 | Female | Science | Undergraduate |
| Naomi | Thailand | 9 | Female | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Mari | Hong Kong | 11 | Female | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Julie | Taiwan | 11 | Female | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Ani | Taiwan | 11.5 | Female | Science | Undergraduate |
| Gabriel | Hong Kong | 12 | Male | Commerce | Graduate |
| Heather | Korea | 12 | Female | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Marc | Taiwan | 13 | Male | Science | 2nd Undergraduate |
| Robert | Korea | 14 | Male | Arts | Undergraduate |
| Lora | Taiwan | 14 | Female | Science | Undergraduate |
| Hugo | Taiwan | 14 | Male | Science | Undergraduate |
| Ulrika | Taiwan | 15 | Female | Science | Undergraduate |
| Nansen | Colombia | 20's | Male | Education | Undergraduate |

Data collection procedure

In order for the researchers to elicit narrative and stories from individual interviews, it was necessary for them to gain trust from each of the participants. To that end, steps were taken to be acquainted with participants before the interviews were conducted. When participants contacted the researchers about the study, the purposes of the study were clearly explained. Once they understood the research and what the study required from them, meetings were set up to become further acquainted with each of the participants. They also had opportunities to ask about the researchers themselves and about their backgrounds. Efforts were made to ensure that during the interviews, both researchers and the participants were comfortable.

Pre-interview steps

Prior to the interviews, each of the participants had given their informed consent forms to the researchers (Appendix B). A short information form followed asking for participants' background information (Appendix C). In addition to gathering general information, this information also confirmed the eligibility of each of the participants. Once their eligibility was confirmed, a questionnaire consisting of sixteen open-ended questions (Appendix D) was given to each to be completed at their earliest convenience. No deadline was set for the completion of the questionnaires in order to provide ample time to brainstorm and recall their experiences. Both researchers did their best to accommodate participants' schedules. Once they completed the questionnaires, each contacted the researchers to schedule interview times and submit questionnaires. The questions on the questionnaire were similar to the questions asked during the interview. The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold: (1) it was designed to prepare participants for the interview by helping them to brainstorm and recall their experiences; (2) the questionnaire provided additional data from participants' own written responses to the interview questions. Researchers were able to check for consistency by comparing participants' responses during the interview to the written questionnaires.

Interviews

The main focus of the interviews was to allow participants to share their experiences. Following the *topical* style interview, structured questions were asked focusing on detail examples and context. Questions were also open-ended following the *cultural* style interview to encourage participants to elaborate on any ideas and beliefs

that they felt were relevant to each of the research questions (Appendix E). Interview questions were asked using Spradley's (1979) guidelines to ensure that: (1) the purpose of each question was explicitly explained; (2) explanations were repeatedly offered to participants regarding the project, the interview process and method; (3) different types of questions, for example, descriptive and contrast questions, were asked in order to understand the context of each response.

All interviews took place in a classroom on the campus of UBC, lasting between one to two hours. Interviews were audio-taped and brief notes were taken during the interview. Socializing and friendly interactions always took place prior to and after the interviews. Tea and coffee were also offered as in attempt to make interview sessions more hospitable.

Each of the interviews was conducted with both researchers present, however, only one researcher served as the primary interviewer whereas the other researcher posed as a note taker and occasionally asked for clarifications and follow-up questions. The two researchers took turns serving as the primary interviewer, thus, enabling random match of the primary interviewer to a participant. The order of the fifteen interviews was determined by the order of participants' reply to the researchers after completing their questionnaire; therefore, both researchers were unable to anticipate who their next interviewee would be. One case of non-random match of interviewer to interviewee occurred with Gabriel, who is a friend of the author of this thesis. Arrangements were made for the other co-researcher to conduct the interview with Gabriel.

Post interview follow-up

After the analysis of the data (participant information, questionnaire, interview, field notes), all participants were invited to discuss results and findings. They were given the opportunity to omit any personal information and correct any of the researchers' interpretations. During this session, they were also informed that the transcriptions would remain unedited by the researchers in order to retain their original meaning and nuances. Participants were also reassured of their anonymity and were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms. However, some were unable to attend the follow-up session, therefore some of the pseudonyms were chosen by the researchers.

Data analysis

Both researchers shared the responsibility of transcribing the interview data. Data for this study were coded and analyzed using the fifth revision of the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUD*IST). This program was designed to assist researchers in managing and exploring qualitative data in coding-based research (QSR N5 Reference Guide, 2000).

Upon coding all of the data, emphases were placed on how the stories and narratives were communicated. Emergent themes were discovered through tone of speech, utterance, repetition, and hesitation, all of which were analyzed. In addition, the relationship between students' narratives and stories and their social context was the key that allowed the researcher to formulate theories (Merriam, 1998). Comparisons were constantly made to ensure consistency and validate the researcher's theories.

Limitations of this approach

In qualitative interviewing, the researcher's position is not neutral. The depth of understanding required to conduct qualitative interviewing makes it difficult for the researcher to remain value free or neutral toward the issues raised. The depth in which the interviewee allows the research to explore depends on researcher's personality, interests, experiences, and biases. Consequently, what the researcher hears may depend on his or her experiences. To prevent personal biases from distorting the research result, efforts were made to check the data with participants. Participants were invited to review the transcriptions of the interviews and the result of the analysis. In addition, the collaborative design of this research provides interpretations from two researchers, ensuring a greater degree of reliability.

Another limitation to this approach lies in the fact that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the fifteen participants of this study. This sample represents only a small population of the student body in the Greater Vancouver area. However, it is believed that the depth and the richness of the data may inspire further questions for future research.

Finally the author of this thesis is aware that tools used in a research shapes the research to a certain extent. The computer software (NUD*IST) selected for the analysis of this study may have imposed certain set of procedures and rigidity (Merriam, 1998). It should be noted, therefore, that had other software been selected for analysis, the results may have differed. The author encourages the replication of this study in the future using different software and methods of analysis.

Chapter Four

Results of the study

This chapter presents a summary of the findings collected in this study. It documents ESL immigrant students' responses to the following question: What did university students, once enrolled as ESL students in the British Columbia school system, identify as socio-cultural factors that influenced their integration process into Canadian society and the school system? In pursuing the answers to this general question, this study sought to understand students' perceptions of the effect of the following significant factors: participants' academic achievement, participants' backgrounds, participants' ESL experiences and immigration process, and participants' views on identity. In addition, this chapter documents participants' advice for ESL students, parents, and teachers.

4-1-1 Participants' perceptions of their academic success

Questions pertaining to participants' perception of their success were asked in order to examine the connection between students' academic achievement and the influences of socio-cultural factors. When we asked students whether or not they felt they were successful for having entered a Canadian university, it was clear their perceptions were mainly defined by the academic standards set by family members. Generally, those students who expressed a strong sense of obligation to their parents tended to be reluctant to view themselves as having been successful.

No, not in this sense. Uh, as I said my, my dad was really into, um, my educational training so, um, like a, bachelor degree is a must in the family ...like you can sense it, they would, they'd just sort of look down on you, if you couldn't make it. So there was a pressure getting in and I had to get in

for sure, especially my sister got in and you know. Um, it, it wasn't even the choice of UBC or SFU, it was UBC, UBC, UBC, cus' uh, yeah cus' my sister was from UBC. (Mari)

Six out of 14 students viewed themselves as not successful. It was evident that the standards set by other family members played a significant influence on perceptions of their success. For example, Robert's take on success appeared to be greatly affected by the accomplishments of his brother and the expectations of other family members:

my brother who was 6 years older than me, ...he finished his, uh, undergraduate education in Korea. He came to the US. Where he started working on his, uh, masters, and, now he is finishing up his Ph.D. ...having a successful brother, uh, which is uh, also big, big problem ...it's just, it's just the fact that he is uh successful, that, that make, that drives you crazy, because you don't want to, you don't want to be told that you are the...the less successful one, or, or not as smart one. As, as the brother or, or in like, or they say, you know, like you know like, "oh the, the older one's always better", I mean, doesn't matter what family. They, they, they, I don't want, I don't want to hear these things, from my, my family members or my, my, relatives...

It can be seen from Robert's response that he did not desire to be perceived as the lesser achiever. Consequently, he firmly defined success as being able to surpass others:

First of all, I resent it when people say, uh, if you, if you successfully integrate into, the normal, quote unquote society, then, ...they they think it's a, a success. And I, I actually don't think, that to be success, be...when you, when you come here, be, being able to, uh, integrate, it's uh, more or less, uh, what you have to do. It's not something that you do, and then, it's a success because, success is something that, you do, uh, you surpass other people. And then, you become more, than, than I I, say that would be success. But being like, in-integration is, just like being other people.

In many cases, success was strictly defined as achieving high academic standing. As Robert suggested, this was because "...having grown up being told repeatedly that uh, your, your life depends on your academic performance...[t]hat makes you very desperate,

very very desperate. So, um, so it makes you try harder". Indeed parental expectations were deemed to be profoundly important:

...I think from, from elementary, from when I was little um, school is something, it's very important in their minds because um, both of them went to college back in Taiwan so eh, they, they just know that school is the way to go so, from the very, from when I was very young, I was trained to focus a lot on school and, and, and eh, do my best in school so, that became a habit of mine and something I just knew I have to do so... (Ulrika).

In the case with Ani, obtaining high marks was not only an obligation to her family, but to her country as well.

I think mainly is because of my parents. Yeah as I said my dad forces me to study all the time, and mainly because, actually my dad always feeds me with this like, "you're Taiwanese, you should succeed in Canada, so people in Canada would look at Taiwan as like, a better country", or something. But then actually I don't really believe in that...

Other participants who considered themselves as not successful suggested that entering a university is only the first step toward success; their success would be mainly determined by their ability to graduate from university:

Going to university? Um, it wasn't even um...uh, um, the one thing that you should realize about Korean, or Chinese people is, that they have this um, stereotype, just...just stuck in their head that after high school, university is the next step. It's naturally the next step, it's um, you know, I talk to people who have lived here for all their lives and they say, "maybe I'll take a year off", "maybe I'll go to a college, um, and then I'll transfer to an university and major in something else, maybe I'll do this, maybe I'll do that", and um, for me to um, listen to them and talk about their options and their different goals, um, for me it's not very um, very familiar to me um, because my parents have told me um, since I was very little, to me and my sisters that after high school, it's university, a good university, not just any university. Um, especially in Korea, there are, there's this distinction, definite distinction between a good university and a bad university, and um, and they um, if you don't go to university there, you are basically toast. (Heather)

Graduating from a university was never an option for participants. It was assumed to be an obligation to their families.

...I think graduating will be a successful like standard for like um when the student actually graduates. (Julie)

So yeah, it's a success too, but I don't think it's a huge success, yeah. Well the huge success will be if I can, graduate (laugh), you know graduation will be a big success, yeah, just getting into it, is not that hard. (Lora)

Participants faced a tremendous amount of pressure to enter and graduate from a university. Julie offered an interesting insight as to why parents place an enormous amount of pressure on their children to succeed:

... I just get the impression that first generation of immigrants do tend to be more focusing to like schooling rather than second generation. Cause, it may be that it's a focus that why their parents like, why their family moved, and it's probably because everyone's going through that process of uh, adjusting...

The data coincide with Julie's comment; 8 out of 14 participants identified education as the main reason for their family's decision to immigrate to Canada. Therefore, it was a duty to perform well academically so their parents' efforts would not be in vain.

Unlike those that perceived themselves as not successful, 6 out of 14 participants responded "yes" when asked if they perceive themselves as successful students.

Although some participants commented on the pressures from parents, interestingly, the majority in this group attributed their success more to their own hard work and persistence:

I think I am pretty, I'm a pretty successful student, I mean, like, or else I wouldn't be here I guess. Like, it, it wou-it took a lot of work, and, a lot of persistence. Like just not giving up, and, yeah. I mean like, like anybody else there's little blocks, and tough times you experience but yeah, especially when you're like...Like getting into university was also that way, but also getting through first year LAUGHS, was also that way.

It was, first year was very tough for me. And, yeah, just getting through that was just like, "Wow", you know. I can't believe I survived...(Beth)

I think so yeah, um, um, yeah, if, if you can get into an university, it's sort of eh, quite an accomplishment I guess, yeah, especially um, I, I, know a lot of um, formal ESL classmates of mine, didn't really eh, have a chance to go to university they sort of ended up in college instead so I feel I was, I was pretty good, and I feel pretty good about myself for eh, coming to university and accomplish this goal yeah. (Ulrika)

This group described themselves as independent learners and commented on having a better grasp on how to meet academic demands.

4-1-2 Participants' definitions of a successful ESL student

To ensure the consistency of responses, we asked them to define a successful ESL student. Participants' views of their success and the success of other ESL students were complex and often different. Whereas academic achievements were the defining factors for the majority of the participants' own success, only 1 out of 14 participants defined other successful ESL students based on academic achievement. The rest of the participants offered various different definitions of a successful student. Interestingly, despite the variety of definitions, one common theme was clear; 13 out of 14 participants suggested that a successful ESL student is defined intrinsically:

...I would consider them successful, because they are doing what they want to do...It's ...um...not everybody wants to go to university...so.
(Maia)

Um...successful student? I suppose someone that enjoys what they're studying...um...they're learning...and .um...Even if it's difficult they'll still...Enjoy it...LAUGH...and...I think...um...I think in in...in general terms...I think success is...um...being able to atteign the goals you set out I think...For myself...it's sort of...having satisfaction and...um...what I do and um...finding fulfillment...(Naomi)

Five participants suggested hard work and overcoming challenges as crucial elements of success:

Probably someone who is, um, not afraid to meet challenges and then, who's pretty hard working, cause I know, um, me personally is not really smart, like not as smart as my brother, and so, um, hard working probably...(Julie)

...Like how much, how important hard work is. And persistence. And I think, a good student needs both those things. Just not to give up. I mean, we all have barriers, like, no, nobody goes, like just breezes through school. I mean, it just doesn't happen. So, being able, to, like, I guess being able to trust yourself, which sometimes I don't trust myself ENOUGH. And, I think if a student was able to really believe in themselves, then, know that they can do something, they'll go really far. (Beth)

There was an apparent discrepancy between the way participants defined their own success and the success of others. Generally, they focused on the efforts placed in academic work as the means to academic success when defining the success of other ESL students. On the contrary, they defined their own success according to high academic standards set by their parents. In comparing the differences, it was clear that participants did not apply the same definition of success on other students as it was applied on them. This in turn created tensions and apparent contradictions in their views of successful ESL students:

Um, yes and no. I mean, uh, it is a success to be able to attend university, but that does not determine, you know, success, well that's not how I see success in life...um, although it is a, um, you know, a good achievement to go to university, um, I don't see people who don't go to university being unsuccessful, just because they could be doing something else with their life, you know. Uh, I mean, I think a lot of people will see this as a success, because, uh, parents put that pressure on ESL students to, to, to have to go to university, to be successful, but whereas I've learned that's not true. I know people who don't go to university who are very successful, like, so...I do, you know, you know, uh...I am thankful that I am in university and I think that it is a, you know, good achievement in

my life, um...So I do consider that successful in that sense. I, um, I also see, other people who don't learn English as being successful, so I don't see that this is, you know, being special in a sense, that I don't see myself being special because...because I was an ex-ESL student, and know I am going to university. I don't see myself as especially successful in that sense. (Gabriel)

The discrepancies in their definition of success revealed the tension they experienced as immigrants. As first generations of immigrants, participants and their parents arrived in Canada with strong cultural values and beliefs of their first culture, many of which differed from the culture of Canada. This is a critical point for educators to recognize because participants found themselves caught between two different systems of culture and expressed the stress associated with their position:

...I think, they, my parents like, they showed the parts of my own culture but sometimes, they push it too much. You know and they push it on me too much. And, you know, like I understand like the importance of it, and it is really important. I think I've gotten a really good balance, but sometimes I don't think they understand the Canadian side enough, and that's led to a lot of conflict in my family. Like, especially when you, you, you reach that age when you're trying to discover your own identity. And, like you know, when you get to like, what is 14, 15 or whatever. I started having, especially a lot of conflict with my mom, because she is, she hangs on to Jap-Jap-Japan, Japanese culture, language, everything really tightly, and, and, so she doesn't understand sometimes, my Canadian, idea, ideals or views that I have. And in that way, yeah, it wasn't really good. Let's see, yeah, that could've helped if, if she could've been a little bit more understanding about that. (Beth)

Clearly, parents had shaped participants' views of success, however, the majority also suggested that success is defined intrinsically.

The following sections will address other socio-cultural factors that contributed to participants' views of success. The data to follow will offer explanations for the apparent discrepancies between parents' and participants' views of success.

4-2 The impact of participants' backgrounds on their perceptions of success

This section identifies various factors in participants' backgrounds that have played a significant role in shaping their views on success. Two specific factors emerged from this section. It begins with parental influence-the way in which parents applied pressure upon the participant to achieve high academic standing. This is followed by an investigation of the impact of their educational experiences in their country of origin on their success in Canada.

4-2-1 How parents compelled participants to succeed

A commonality participants shared was their views on the seemingly inescapable pressure from parents. Overall, they concurred that parents played a major influence in their perceptions of success. No question in the study asked them to describe their parents' influence on their academic achievements. However, almost all commented on the influence of their parents. Moreover, what proved to be more interesting was that, despite the rigorous demands from their parents, participants revealed very little resistance. Instead, they demonstrated a strong sense of obligations to honor their parents by meeting the standards they set, as Gabriel suggested:

...because of the pressure put on by the parents. Um, you know, you have to perform at school, you know, it was the pressure to perform at school, so we were used to studying hard. We're used to, um, you know, getting the grades, you know because that's sort of, part of being, you know, to please our parents, was to do well in school.

...another goal was to get into university, um, that was partly, um...due to pressure by my parents too.

It appeared that one of the ways in which parents were able to instill a strong sense of obedience was through their apparent sacrifice in order that participants would receive a better education and greater opportunities:

...my dad would usually drive me to Vancouver (from Richmond) and then wait there for me, like after an hour, and then came back. So in a way, I knew there is like, I have this responsibility of like studying, because my dad is sacrificing so much for me. So I guess, yeah, my dad is using this strategy to make me study. (Ani)

...they all stayed (in Vancouver), they were, like my dad could do the you know, travel back and forth and just come like twice a year or something like that but he, he really didn't want that he said, some oh ok, just the family going up together in a way so, yeah, I really have to appreciate them for sacrificing a lot (laugh)...(Mari)

Education was viewed as a duty, not a personal choice. Participants generally felt responsible for their parents' decision to immigrate to Canada, in order that they could receive a better education. Consequently, meeting expectations was the fundamental step to repaying and honoring parents. Some, however, stated that parents had utilized their sense of duty and demanded results that were beyond their call of duty as students:

...if you think you cannot, go into four year university when you graduate from high school then, start thinking about 2 year colleges, and and community colleges, and you can always transfer, and, think of oth-think of, what other options rather than, and, and, and like thinking about just like, Harvard or ...like John Hopkins, cause some of the people that I have taught, my students, they, they are always very into that. Especially the immigrant children, because in the family they would be told repeatedly that that is a symbol of success. And that your parents are like..."I'm doing, I'm working like 18 hours a day, it's just so you can have a decent education like, can't you at least do this for me", and, and that is not a very good way of, encouraging people (LAUGHS) to do something. I mean, it would make them maybe try harder, but, if it doesn't work out, it's going to be, uh, well have uh, not, not such a positive outcome I think...I know it's not easy knowing the, the difference between, uh, being, being uh, an overzealous monster, or, or being an encouraging parent, but, but, I mean, I guess you just have to figure it out on your own. (Robert)

It appeared through Robert's comment that the way in which some parents' expressed their expectations was manipulative in nature. Nevertheless, many acknowledged the sacrifices made by their parents and felt obligated to meet their demands.

In addition to offering insights into parental demands, participants also shed light into why parents felt strongly about their academic performance. That is, participants suggested that personal security issues played a part in parents' demand for high academic achievement. In other words, they often felt the pressure of having to save face, as part of their social status among friends rested on their children's success:

But yeah, and then the other thing is um...yeah the pressure of getting out, but not, not from their own ESL classmates, but from your parents, your family and all the other relatives and, every, you know, every one else you know, sort of thing. Cus', when, when my, my parents go meet up friends and stuff like new friends, they always ask "oh, is, is your daughter out of ESL yet" you know, kind of thing. So that, that's ridiculous! it's like you know, I'll, I always want to say to them "well it's none of your business" right, but they will, so I sort of sense that it, sooner I get out, then the better it's for my family...(Mari)

Success according to parents often meant more than achieving good grades. It also included entering a high-paying profession:

Sometimes just push too hard or just tell them like, in a...in like in Chinese cultures or I don't know about other Asian cultures but that, or, actually I don't know about, about Hong Kong or China, but like in my culture, like yeah in Taiwan, like parents, a lot of parents want their children be a doctor or be a lawyer. That's, well that's something I really disagree with, although yeah these were good jobs you know, they get good pays but, it's, it's not suitable for everyone, yeah. But sometime just to, push their children to work, to be a doctor, to be a lawyer. (Hugo)

Moreover, participants' success was always compared with that of others without the consideration of differences in students' abilities and backgrounds. This was suggested by Ani during her ESL and university experiences:

...my dad used to say, "you have to be like, out of ESL". Because I was here for a year I guess, and then there was, another Taiwanese came to our, to our school and, she was pretty good in English. I guess when she came, she was like level 1, and then like a few months later, they moved her to level 3, and then my dad was really mad at me because I didn't do that, because I was moving like gradually, like step by step, so I guess my dad was really, yeah, he was, he was telling me everyday like "you have to be out of ESL", and then he said, " you need to go to UBC and you have to get like a bachelor's degree" you know, that's what he says all the time. Like when I was in grade 11, he was already getting mad at me. Like he was, he thought like I wouldn't get into UBC or and everyday he would usually yell at me or something. It was such a torture.

But then there's this one like, we can get into like unconditional (at UBC), if we have like 88 percent average. But then I had like 87.75 so I couldn't get into unconditional, so I only got into conditional acceptance. And my mom was talking to our friend, and then her friend said "oh my daughter got into unconditional" and then my mom was yelling at me, it sucked!

4-2-2 Educational experiences

Another significant factor that helped shaped participants' perceptions of their success was their educational experiences in their first cultures. Almost all reported having experienced rigid educational systems prior to coming to Canada.

Unquestionably their previous educational experiences served as the standards by which participants had to measure up:

In China (...) the education back then was very stringent. You... basically... uh...had to get up at like 6 every morning...go to school till about 2...come home for lunch and a nap till about 3 and go back to school till around 6. And THEN... homework was another, whole other thing. Like You...you see...I worked as hard, as FAST as I could and I...I used to get done at around 10 at night. So that was like the normal life for an elementary kid..in ..in China...(Maia)

Well...not militant as like in violent...but very strict and very methodical and expects a lot of work done from you. LAUGHS...They have a booklet of work to do like homework. You have to copy out words and stuff like that...For learning Kanji and you had to do exercises for math...And....Um...Yeah...And you had pages of them assigned everyday...and um...I wouldn't be able to finish them. I was either too

lazy or didn't have the capacity to do them. So I'd just always tell the teacher next day..."oh...I forgot them at home...Um...I'll bring them tomorrow" cause you get graded on the LAUGHS homework you did...LAUGHS...(Naomi)

...in terms of school, it was fairly intensive. School began around um, 8 AM, and went on till 3 PM, but, although that was the school, we had more private instructions going on both in terms of having tutors and also in terms of going to, private institutions where you take courses in, math, English, and occasionally, science. And now, we take logic too ... And, and then, I had, let's see, I had three tutors...(Robert)

...school life was pretty hectic, like um, I would do school about 11 hours a day, it sounds amazing, I didn't realize that's, that's quite hectic until I get here, so I started like we would go to school at 7 and we won't go home til 6 o'clock in the, afternoon. (Ulrika)

school ... There's nothing really interesting I think LAUGHS. Except that there's like tons of exams, tons of exams and, you, you gotta study for a long period of time. And, and when you, when you got back, when you get back from home you have to go to cram school to study for like English, math and stuff like that. (Marc)

Diligence and hard work were the common characteristics that participants shared. These virtues were instilled in them beginning at a young age. Therefore, it was not surprising to learn that they were expected to continue with the same kind of work ethic.

4-3 The impact of socio-cultural factors on participants' perceptions of success

This section focuses on the socio-cultural factors that shaped views of success. More specifically, this section documents participants' experiences as ESL students in British Columbia school system. This section of the chapter is divided into the following sub-sections: participants' feelings toward their ESL programs; participants' goals in ESL programs and; the effects of their immigration experiences.

4-3-1 Being an ESL student

Participants were asked to share their views about their ESL experiences using open-ended questions. Generally they conveyed negative feelings toward their experiences as ESL students. The challenges in the ESL programs entailed: being misunderstood and mistreated as ESL students; instances of racism and bullying; feelings of inferiority; and the segregation of ESL from Canadian born students. All of these difficulties stemmed mainly from their ESL status.

Seven out of 14 participants revealed their dislike for being labeled as ESL students. Disclosing their ESL status often resulted in mistreatment from their Canadian born counterparts.

Um, yeah, not like publicly ... they know that you are ESL students, they don't wanna talk to you (laugh). You know I don't think it's a good idea to, let people know that you don't speak English. I know, I think it's ok after they find, like they talk to you first, and then they found out that you're ESL students, but I don't like the idea that they know before hand, right? So then, they don't even wanna talk to you right, even the first time. So it, it makes it really hard to make friends with the Canadians...(Lora)

Moreover, their Canadian born classmates were often reluctant to associate with ESL students, creating greater difficulties for participants to integrate socially. Mari noted that difficulties arose because Canadian students were unable to sympathize with their struggles and often viewed them as untrustworthy.

Well I think the disadvantage is obviously that, you are an ESL student you know, no matter what, you get spotted out, and although you're enjoying your ESL classes and stuff, people will look at you quite differently. Yeah, cus' I mean for my Caucasians friends, they didn't know what was like right, so it was basically you know, they...it has, yeah, they, they just, they just guess the worst right, so you know, they're, that was not, that was not good. Um, and...for me I find that you don't get the, as much, as much trust as, as you would've been if you were just a regular student, and participating in like school activities sort of like, um, yeah I

remember, I remember...they were, they were friendly but, to a certain extent. They were friendly to the point...um, you can't never really get, you would never be like this close, sort of, so they would have their own little secrets...

Three individuals reported having met with more severe consequences because of their ESL status. That is, their ESL status was often associated with academic incompetence, by both Canadian born students and teachers alike. This negative perception in turn became the motivating force behind their aim for high academic achievement:

there's the pressure to get out because you don't want people to think you're, stupid. (Marc)

...as I said, they don't really like me, like I didn't really have a lot of friends. So I guess one way to show them that I'm good or something, is to get good marks. It's like I remember, when I first, my first term report card, I had like C's, 1 A and it was like, and just blanks in those English parts. And then like I gradually get like, a lot of A's by, I was here in grade 6 right, I had like 9 A's out of 12 when I was in grade 7 already and then like, I'll be better than them. So I guess in a way that yeah, that motivated me to study, is to show them, that, "hey I'm not just a dumb ESL kid", yeah. (Ani)

...some ESL teachers, not all of them, but some of them just assume that just because we don't speak the language, mean, it means that we're naturally stupid ...I wanted people to I guess take me seriously. Not think that "she's an ESL student" or she like, I didn't want them to realize, when they hear me speak um, that "oh, her um, English must be bad" or English must her second language". I didn't want anyone to think that way. Um, and I wanted to sort of, um, I wanted people to ask me if I was born here, or if I was, you know, when I came, I was like an infant or something. (Heather)

Clearly being labeled as ESL students was troublesome for some participants. In addition to the desire of surpassing their Canadian born peers academically, many also expressed a desire to be considered as native English speakers. There was however, one participant

who responded positively towards her ESL experience and it was due to the fact that her program did not apply any labels to the ESL students:

...I thought that my ESL program was really good because, um, of the fact that, well I just realize now, but, the fact that we weren't labeled as, "oh, ESL students", you know. (Beth)

In addition to the mistreatments participants' received, instances of racism also fueled participants' negative views toward their ESL experiences. Participants reported having confronted racism from various sources, most notably from their Canadian born peers.

cus' um, when I, I went to washroom, it was um, I think it was Remembrance day or something, we had a ceremony, yeah, I got caught in the, washroom by 3 girls, 3 Caucasian girls.

You got caught?

Not, not caught, like, like, they, they like, um, pretending that, they wanna um, threaten me or, anything like, they like, stand at the door like say um, they, they, they say something like, like, they thought that I didn't understand English, but actually by that time I can understand English (laugh) ...I don't remember what exactly they said, but it's like, like this, one girl she said something about um, the door's locked, the washroom door like, you cannot get out or something...I was going out right? Yep, but then the 3 of them they just standing on the wall, on the, on the door. Yeah they, they won't let me out. I was like oh well, the first thing I thought was like, they thought I didn't understand English. So I myself pretend I didn't understand English (laugh). So then I just like, I just go like, without talking to them, anything. (Lora)

...and also, um, I think, one time, uh, I was um, told a racist comment on the playground but that's just like, and then it was by, a student younger than me, and I was so pissed LAUGHS cause he was younger than me. And then like, uh, he was saying uh, "Why don't you go back to your country?" and then I was ask-I was saying, "Where were you born?" and he said Vancouver, "Why don't you go back to Vancouver then?" LAUGHS. So it was, pretty, bad, bad experience but, the rest was ok. (Julie)

It was not surprising that participants highlighted cases of misunderstanding and mistreatment in their ESL experiences. Many reported being segregated from the rest of the student body. In some cases, ESL classrooms were separated from the main school building. Evidently participants spent little time interacting with Canadian born students which, inevitably, resulted in miscommunication and misunderstanding of cultures.

I was in a special ESL class, so I was in, our class was exclusively ESL students. Uh...Actually we were in a portable so we were completely separated from the school LAUGHS! ...we weren't integrated at all. So we were completely separated. (Gabriel)

When asked how much interaction took place with students outside of ESL programs, some participants responded with the following:

...very little, like uh, if at all, um, probably, um, uh, almost non-existent, because um, like I said we were in a totally separate building, um, so even during our, lunch break or, uh, recess, or whatever it was, uh, it would, we would stick with our own group, we wouldn't interact with other people very much yeah. (Gabriel)

...in ESL, I was not too happy cus' like (laugh) you know like we, for our school the ESL classroom it's not like in the building, it's the other building...it's not connected to the main building. It's like all the students, ESL students around there right? So I don't like it that way cus' then you know, in some way they want us to like, interact with the Canadians but then, you know the buildings are so far is kind of funny (laugh), you know? (Lora)

... I think the main disadvantage (of ESL) is that, it, cus' ESL classes are kinda grouped together. And that kinda, separate you from the rest of the school population. So, it's like, there's like, little group who are the ESL ss-student right. And they don't talk to the other peoples in the, in the school right. So, I, I think some of them...like, I think, that, that will, limit their ability to interact with the other people, right. (Marc)

The geographic location of the ESL program in most schools conveyed to the participants the message of segregation. In addition, the separation also injected the participants with a sense of inferiority to the rest of the student body. Consequently, 5 out of 14

participants expressed the feeling of inferiority in their mainstream classes. The feeling of inferiority created a clearly defined division between ESL and Canadian born students.

but, at the same time because they are in that, in the ESL class, some of them feel inferior to regular students and I don't know, I think most people do have that, you know, if you're an ESL student, you're of a lower class um, like in UBC if you're not in English 112 you're English 099, what is the number mean? Well the number means you're not good enough to be in English 112, which is a lower number, so which means you're not up to par um, so I know that they do feel that way. (Celeste)

Probably the, um, the intimidation of, of the other students. That was probably the most difficult thing to deal with. Uh, Because we were different, you know, uh, I felt inferior, um to the other students, you know, quote, unquote, regular students. So THAT was the most difficult thing to overcome, you know, being intimidated by you know people who spoke English fluently and who grew up here and who you know, with this culture, so yeah...that was the most difficult. (Gabriel)

The negative feelings toward ESL programs were mainly caused by feelings of alienation, inferiority and misunderstanding. In addition, their cultural backgrounds also played a significant part in their tendency to shy away from their Canadian born peers.

...I think that the reserved nature of Japanese culture...the culture of shame as they call it. Yeah...I think that really...that really like...forced me to...to...be very introverted. (Naomi)

...Chinese culture. You, you tend to be a little more timid, than, than other people, so, uh, that, that sort of hindered at first too. You know...That's probably why, part of the reason why, I felt inferior, to, some other, uh, Canadian students. (Gabriel)

These feelings lessened participants' desire to befriend their mainstream counterparts, as suggested by their tendency to interact mostly with friends that shared the same ESL experiences (this point will be made evident later in the chapter). Nevertheless, participants discovered ways to overcome the difficulties they faced in the ESL programs. Moreover, their success was partly defined by their effort and ability to

overcome these adversities. This is made clear in the next section of this chapter as it documents their goals during their study in the ESL program.

4-3-2 Participants' goals in ESL programs

Questions about participants' goals in ESL programs were designed to further understand their attitudes toward ESL experiences. Three themes emerged from this question: exiting ESL programs quickly, integrating into the mainstream, and speaking like a "Canadian", were the goals participants set out to accomplish. Reasons underlying participants' responses were their desires to overcome alienation, meet parental expectations, and to be empowered through their own voices.

It was clear that exiting ESL programs was an important goal to achieve because success was partly defined by their ability to exit quickly. Some felt ESL programs accomplished very little in improving their English. Instead, it only enhanced their feelings of inferiority. Moreover, the longer one remained in the program, the less likely that individual would succeed. Subsequently, ESL classes represented a place for those who failed to improve their English.

...my goals, were to learn English I guess and then try to be eh, in regular classes and get out of ESL as fast as I could, but that's, that was my goal ...I feel if I can get out as fast, really quickly, then I feel I've succeeded, so it's something that I wanted also so, and plus eh, it's kind of shallow to say this, but you impress people by saying "hey, I just got out of ESL" and then, and eh they would all look at you, "wow you did that" and so that's something you also wanted to do because you know, to, to show the, your classmates that you have achieved something right? (Ulrika)

Yeah just get out of ESL as soon as possible. Yeah it was...there was...cus'...cus' it's to a point where, cus' I think my ESL learnings were, weren't really...it was basically an improvement and a polishment of my English skills, so the level of achievement or, or actually the advancement, you know, it's not really that obvious in a way, so I wouldn't really tell of,

I couldn't really tell if, if, if uh, my English is any better than yesterday's or last week's right...(Mari)

... the thing about ESL is that, uh, everyone wants to get, get out from ESL. And, and the, and your level is kinda like your symbol of status. So if you, if you're in like level 1 for like 2 years then people think you're stupid LAUGHS right. Yeah, so like, we like, we always compete to, to move up a level and stuff, right. And that force you to study, pretty hard. (Marc)

Success was understood with reference to the sense of belonging and recognition.

Subsequently some expressed their desires to speak and be heard.

...I wanted to um, in a room full of Canadian people, you know, like in front of a school assembly or something, I wanted to speak...That was one of things that I just desperately wanted to do...Um, and I did get to speak in front of the uh, whole school which was amazing. Um, and I wanted to, I wanted people to I guess take me seriously. Not think that "she's an ESL student". (Heather)

its before you start talking to someone there's like...I think that...they don't want to talk to me...and that's why I don't want to talk to them because I think that they may not talk...like...and a...Asian people are...uh...they would think I was...too...different or something like that. (Maia)

In order to confirm participants' feelings, they were asked specifically to comment on whether or not they felt their ESL programs were helpful. This question proved that their perceptions about ESL programs were complex and often contradictory. Thus far in this section, negative feelings toward their ESL programs have been expressed.

However, when asked about the helpfulness of their ESL programs, 8 out of 14 participants responded positively. Interestingly, they attributed the positive features of their ESL programs to its effectiveness in helping them cope socially, while, very little positive comments were made regarding the effectiveness of the programs' curriculum.

...they were willing to be friends...like...um...I didn't really have to...um...take any...make any...um...effort on my own...they...included

me right away...and I think...I think that was really helpful...cause being the new kid, can't really communicate LAUGHS..they just take...just took...took to me...and that was...that was really nice...(Naomi)
And then I would be sitting in there like...writing, or like, write like, just, just really simple ESL stuff. But I think it was pretty nice. At least you know you are part of the group. At least you know like you can grow with this part of the group. Like study as a part of the group. (Ani)

Oh yeah, um, advantage um, it was, um, it was definitely good that uh, I wasn't stuck in ESL all the time. Um, of course I had to learn English you know cus' that's the foundation of everything they did there. Um, but, it was really great that I could still go out to um, play baseball or you know play soccer and stuff like that and still have time to get to know people whose first language was English. And um, I could feel that as time went on, I slowly started understanding them, I started understanding that um, they weren't really making fun of me for not understanding them, but they were always encouraging me um, one of the first expression I learned was "nice try". Nice try as in not sarcastically, but like nice try because I wasn't all that good of an athlete you know. I was always um, not doing well but um, they would always saying "nice try" you know, "try again", "good job" and I, I heard that and it was, it was really encouraging for me...(Heather)

Social interaction and integration were evidently the highlights of ESL experiences.

Participants were aware that ESL programs were designed to help their English learning, however, according to the majority, ESL classes were most helpful in allowing them to become acquainted with the Canadian school system and society, through which, they were able to successfully acquire English.

Participants also commented on some negative aspects of their ESL programs. It was here that they revealed their mixed feelings, as their remarks were seemingly contradictory. This is clearly demonstrated by Marc in the following dialogue:

So uh, yeah it's kinda like a good escape from the normal, uh, like the normal class. But the thing about ESL is that, uh, everyone wants to get, get out from ESL... I think people like to go to ESL, like ESL classes because they can, like, talk and stuff LAUGHS. And they like the teachers too, like, some games and some exercises like crosswords and stuff. So it's, it's not as hard as the other classes, right. But there is always pressure that you have to, get out of, um, ESL, so you can take normal

classes right. So, I'm not sure if it's a good thing or a bad thing. I think it's kind of a mixture or both, yeah...I don't know.

Uh, I think the, the advantages of ESL program is that um, it, it's a good place to, uh, start. Like melting into the mainstream society. But, while doing that and still maintaining, like finding, people that you're comfortable dealing with. Right. But the, I think the main disadvantage is that, it, cause ESL classes are kinda grouped together. And that kinda, separate you from the rest of the school population. So, it's like, there's like, a little group who are the ESL ss-student right. And they don't talk to the other peoples in the, in the school right. So, I, I think some of them...like, I think, that, that will, limit their ability to interact with the other people, right.

Many were struggling to enjoy their ESL classes while facing the pressure to exit them quickly and transition into mainstream classes. Although ESL classes were places to find comfort and support, they also interfered with their progress of learning and often times discouraged students from achieving higher goals. The primary reasons being that students in ESL classes were mostly from the same first-language group and exiting ESL programs was often too difficult:

...there are too many Chinese immigrants around, so eh, no matter where you go you see those people who speak the same language, so eh, so that it's eh, disadvantage from, from the very beginning, and then it's also that eh, they, they have so many ESL programs for you, so they put you in there and they pretty difficult to get out...they (the ESL program) want you to write an written exam and they expect you to get a particular mark, eh, eh, you have to get above this mark in order to get out, of ESL programs, and that was pretty difficult to write, cus, cus, for a lot of people they spent two or three years trying to get out of ESL program, so they, would, in a way held back, from what they really wanna to do, and and, I guess they have good intentions, they thought if you can't achieve this grade then you probably would fail or do not as well in regular classes, but I just feel you know, if you try your best and then if you have the will to go on to a regular class, you should have the opportunity to go to regular class...(Ulrika)

As a result, some found themselves learning the majority group's language quicker than English:

...some of the disadvantages um, cus' you know most um, at the time, at least at that time, most um, immigrants were from Hong Kong, or even, yeah you know, yeah. Basically from Hong Kong right. So, um, that's kind of like, um, okay yeah I'm from Taiwan, I was from Taiwan, I was able to learn their, learn different stuff from those people. But then it wasn't that you know, um, multicultural in the ESL program. Yeah you tend to just stick with the same group of people. You don't, and sometimes okay, I learned, yeah I learned Cantonese from them so. Oh yeah I was able to speak Cantonese with them. (Hugo)

Participants' views toward their ESL programs became more interesting when we inquired about whether or not they felt their first-languages had helped them to learn English in ESL and mainstream classes. As has already been mentioned, the majority of the participants felt there was a lack of environment and opportunity to practice their English; moreover, they disliked being grouped together with other ESL students. However, they did not seem to favor an immersion style program as they overwhelmingly expressed the importance of their first-language use.

...Japanese definitely helps me with my English as well...More than anything I think it's the, confidence, I mean like, um, being in Japanese class and being, competent, very competent in Japanese. I think, gives me the, like, it just, gives me the confidence to know that I can also be competent in other areas of my life. (Beth)

... it's very hard to make that transition from, from this world to that world and eh, if you can find something sort of connects you between the two worlds, you know, you will, you will feel more comfortable adopting to that new society, so if there were, if I was the only Chinese speaking person, immigrant in my high school, then I'll probably have a very difficult time adjusting to the whole new cultural stuff, so I think it's good that, that eh, there are people of my own native language around, but too many is not good, is not going to be good but eh, the right amount, at least to me, I feel comfortable seeing there's so many people there, yeah. (Ulrika)

Yeah, because like, uh, like in the beginning you don't know what the teacher's saying right. You keep asking, um, the others students, who do understand, right. But if you, you don't have that, link or connection than it would be harder for you to learn and stuff, yeah. (Marc)

Not only was their first-language use important, it was clear that having fellow ESL students to rely on was also important.

There, there were many, well quite of few Taiwanese students there, so yeah. At first I, of course I need, I needed someone to help me with the school work, or not help me with the school work but at least translate like, or at least translate what the teacher was talking about to me. Yeah so I was able to um, complete my homework stuff, yeah. And well, overall was okay and yeah. I was taking like many ESL courses, yeah. (Hugo)

I have to say the majority of my friends are all, uh, from, have Asian background, whether they, their family is Asian, although even if they were born here, or, or, these are people who came later in their life, like, like myself. Or, yeah. So, these, uh, these people, more, more often than not would be able to speak, uh, one or, at least one Asian language, as well as English which they acquired. And then...um, I have, uh, I have very few, uh, non-Asian friends actually. I, I don't know why, it just happened that way. (Robert)

There were apparent conflicting views about ESL programs. On the one hand they expressed their goals of exiting ESL quickly, integrating into the mainstream, and speaking like a "Canadian", but on the other hand they seemed to be reluctant to forego the comfort of being in ESL programs. Many criticized the segregation from native English speakers and the exclusive use of first-languages, while simultaneously commenting on the helpfulness of having fellow ESL students and first-language use in their programs. It was unclear what kind of ESL programs participants wished to see implemented; however, they did offer great advice for ESL practitioners to improve current ESL programs, many of which will be reported later in this chapter.

4-3-3 The effects of participants' immigration process

Aside from the difficulty of learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture, participants' struggles actually began as soon as they were informed about their parents' decision to immigrate to Canada. The decision to move to Canada had a profound psychological impact on some. It is hoped that this section of the chapter will offer a greater understanding of the degree of difficulty immigrant students faced. For example, through Mari's words it should be easy to sympathize with the immigrant students' struggle in parting with their native country and adjusting to a foreign land where they must call home:

It was kind of confusing in a way, it was cus' I mean the whole, it was the whole procedure kind of thing like, you know I didn't just come and, wake up and come the next day sort of, so the all the prior, like the packing, you know then the moving, and all those things, it was, was really, really confusing for, for a 10 year old girl I think...I really didn't understand the whole problem, and they wouldn't tell me what's going on, they just say "ok, we're gonna move so there (laugh)". Yeah but eh, actually was kind of sad cus' I had a, I had a maid since I was like 1 or 2, and she's been with me like all those, you know, up to 10 years, and [...] like my parents weren't really around all the time, she was the only person that was always there and you know, she took care of me and stuff like that and she had to, of course when we came, she had to you know, go back to where she was, some where in main land, so that was kind of sad, that was really, really, sad so, I sort of resent Vancouver from the first, very first moment cus' I thought it was like, you know, Vancouver took away, my, my maid...I remember like the very first night we got here, like, I was so desperate to go back, but then I didn't really want to tell my parents that right, cus' my sister is already verbally you know, proclaimed that she hates it here (laugh), so you know I had to be, I didn't really want them to be totally disappointed, so I still had to, you know, I still have to say to them "oh I like it here", you know but, although I hated it, then, I, I had to turn around and say to my sister, "oh I hate it, I hate it here too" you know. Yeah, so it was, it was not a pleasant journey...(Mari)

The profound affects of their journey to Canada were manifested as soon as participants arrived.

And I just started... freaking out...I had temper tantrums...Just cause like the first six months I was here, I couldn't understand anything...I felt like...Helen Keller...you know...like...just so isolated...and couldn't communicate with anyone...and couldn't really make any friends, because like...they couldn't understand and I couldn't understand them...I just felt so...defensive towards everybody...right...and then my parents finally realized that "oh...she...she...uh...needs...to adjust slowly...like...we need to send her somewhere where she could make... friends...at least communicate...like...have friends that could fully understand her"...right. (Maia)

To the amazement of both researchers, the failure to recognize the difficulty of immigration led school personnel to diagnose Heather as cognitively low functioning because she became emotional while trying to make sense of her new life and culture.

...the first day was just a nightmare...the first day, I didn't speak to anybody...I just remember sitting at my desk and thinking that, I don't know how I was going to survive this place and um...I think at one point I fainted because I cried too much...for the first couple days I was, um, I was crying a lot and I couldn't do anything and uh, the, the people, the principle, the school called our parents and my cousin and um, maybe I should move to a different school because they thought I was um, either mentally challenged or um, emotionally not stable I guess. And then I lied to them, "well, I was having a stomach ache and I couldn't tell any one um, so I um, and I was in pain so I was crying. It wasn't because I was emotionally um, unstable or anything," so they let me stay (laugh). Kind of funny now that I think about it. It was really sad back then. (Heather)

Unquestionably, incidents such as the one described by Heather had a profound affect on participants' self-esteem. For most, academic performances were highly regarded as the symbol of success as defined by their parents. Once they arrived in Canada, the same kinds of expectations were placed upon them despite their lack of English skills and the major changes in their circumstances. Consequently, they went on the defensive against pressure and discouragement.

Well, just prior to coming here I would say I was doing fairly well, because I I did place uh the third in my class just because and, but it was also uh, a slow process going up to that point. Because, when I first started in grade 7, that's when you start getting the ranks. You're told

what what rank you are in, in your class and, and I didn't start off so well, so my family, was in a funeral mood then, but it was all that process building up to the point but when I came here, and then you have these language problems and it tumbles down to, to where you start. And that was hard part I think, to your self-esteem. (Robert)

This section focused on the socio-cultural factors that shaped participants' views of success. It was clear that participants were forced to overcome great adversities, sifting through the complexity of segregation, integration, confusion, and misconceptions. Indeed, a great price had to be paid in order for them to achieve success. This section has shed light on the difficulties immigrant students continue to face. It is hoped that this in turn will allow ESL practitioners to make improvements in ESL programs to address the difficulties ESL immigrant students are confronted with.

4-4-1 Identities and success

The foundation of participants' success was the acquisition of English. Learning a new language, and a new culture that is embedded in the language inevitably leads to changes in identity. Questions pertaining to identity were asked in order to understand the extent to which their views of success shaped their identities. Participants agreed that their success was mainly due to their successful acquisition of English and English in turn played a key role in changing their identities. Not surprisingly, most expressed their eagerness to integrate and gain access into the Canadian culture. This was accomplished through acquiring various aspects of the English language as suggested by 9 out of 14 participants:

...the accent, yeah, that's a good point, yeah. So...I know a lot of people who tell me that, they can hardly hear my accent, but uh...um...so, yeah I guess that DID make me feel more Canadian, you know when I spoke without an accent...(Gabriel)

when I did a lot of um, self evaluation of my stuff in processes, and um, how can I, like when, when, what happens, what are the steps of, of achieving English, at least, not so much mastering it because no one can really master it anything, but, um, being seeing as others, um, being seeing as one with other students, and being seeing as one with Canadian culture, that's important. (Celeste)

I think so, because it's a tool that you need in order to understand the society because eh, if you don't understand English then, when you turn on television or when you flip over those magazines, you wouldn't understand what's going on, so it's sort of a tool leading to that side of the world and if you, if you don't speak English then you probably won't get to that side and you will never know what's going on over there, so yeah, it helped me to become more aware of the, the way that Canadian society functions... (Ulrika)

According to their responses, English was the essential element in their integration process into Canadian culture. Without English they tended to identify themselves as non-Canadians as Marc explained:

I would still view myself as like, a Chinese, right because, I-I don't think my English still good enough and stuff. And...there's some aspect of Canadian culture right, I haven't really grasped.

It is unquestionably important that ESL programs provide students opportunity to speak English. Some participants maintained that their success and identities were achieved and shaped by the English language, through which, they felt empowered as members of the Canadian society.

... when I talk to Canadian, yeah, and then you feel the way you feel, you can, you feel like you can talk to the Canadian, communicate with them, yeah you do feel like you're Canadian, at that, at that moment...(Lora)

...I feel comfortable socializing with them and, and I get close to them then, eh, um, people who are um, Canadians, yep, but it's not um...I think I like them and I want to be friends with them but eh, it's just I'm not confident enough to feel um, if I make a mistake in the way I speak or use the language that maybe they will judge me or something so, I still have this sense of insecurity (laugh) but eh, I think eventually I'll move out of it and hopefully I will, yea. (Ulrika)

Because ESL programs did not provide the amount of time necessary to practice and gain confidence in English, some were forced to find other sources of empowerment. Four participants admitted to have become more proficient in Cantonese than English. They indicated that they had acquired Cantonese far quicker than English because Cantonese speakers dominated the ESL classrooms. Consequently, some suggested their identities were partly transformed by the Cantonese language and the culture embedded within that language.

But then, I guess, being around with Cantonese so much helped me because now I'm like, 50 percent Cantonese. I don't know, I've developed into like a Cantonese person...For example now, I have a class, I have math class. I know a group of Cantonese friends and I know a group of Taiwanese friends. But then usually I would sit with the Cantonese people...Gosh, so I don't know, I, well, my identity changed...My dad used to say that, there's a Cantonese in my family, 2 Taiwanese, and 2 Canadian, and my little brother is...a hybrid, right? He's nothing because he doesn't even speak anything, he's like mixed up, he can speak like, um, he can speak a word in English and then a word in Taiwanese or something. He mixes languages and stuff. Um, I'm the Cantonese, my dad, my mom, they're really pure, 100 percent Taiwanese, then my sisters they're the, they're the Canadians. (Ani)

Some, however, reported that their first language remained their language of choice because they felt they were able to express intimate thoughts in the first language. Interestingly these five participants were all Mandarin speakers. What was not surprising was that most of them came to Canada at a later age.

...I think right now Mandarin is sort of...a language that I use intimately. I don't ...you know...It's because you speak...I speak Mandarin at home. I don't know how to use English...um...as...an intimate...you know you hear people...tell all these mushy words in English...Like with friends you joke around and stuff...and...I, I don't mean...I know how to comfort someone if they...like...I'm totally competent in...um...talking to my friends that...um...being there for them...if they're ...if they're not feeling well or if they're down...you know...the time to comfort them and stuff. But, I'm saying I don't know how to use English comfortably

with....in...like...in a relationship...if...if it got to the intimate...like if it went past...the point of just really close friends...to the intimate level.
(Maia)

The study also asked specifically how they identified themselves culturally. The majority identified themselves as belonging to both cultures. More importantly, they believed that part of their success came from their ability to maintain their first culture while learning another. They reported feeling positively about being able to identify with another culture. That is, possessing the knowledge of two cultures was an advantage they had over their Canadian born peers. It enabled them to extract what they believed to be the positive elements of both cultures and incorporate these elements into their lives.

...I think...Preserving your own culture is very important. I think...Parents should...Although try and encourage them to develop like...a Canadian identity...should also, you know...like...teach them...teach them the homeland...like...the ways...you know...the language....Um...yeah...bilingualism is pretty important. (Maia)

... both experiences actually really helped me to, to open up my eyes you know and see more things. Cus' I can, I can really see a lot of um, my, my friends from, from high school, if they're just came here in grade 11, grade 12 or something like that, and they're so into this little, little Chinese environment around them, they didn't really have to speak a lot of English, they didn't even have to, have to bother to make English friends and stuff like, Caucasians friends and stuff. Um, they just don't see, they, they have really narrow perspective of things, you know. They even have a narrow perspective of Vancouver you know. I think it's quite a, quite a tragedy that you know even now, today, they couldn't, they couldn't gain the confidence to go up and ask directions from, from a Caucasian person you know. I think that's bad, um, but, coming from both cultures and, and trying to, trying to step into both and um, it really helped me to, to look broader than I should. (Mari)

Participants also pointed out that through the natural course of living in Canada, adopting some aspects of Canadian way of life was inevitable. For some, their focused shifted to preserving their first culture:

I think, more than anything I tried to preserve my uniqueness, like the fact that I am Japanese. Like it's pretty easy to become Canadian, especially when you're around so many other Canadians. Yeah....And, and, um, our family adopted a lot of Canadian things, like, you know, celebrating Christmas, and things like that. So, that really helped...I think I took stuff that, from both the Japanese culture and English. Like Canadian culture as well. Like, I mean, Japanese culture is quite centered on the whole academic side of it. And in that sense, I think it really helped me. Like, to show me the importance of academics and how far academics can get you in life. Um, but also, like, uh, Canadian, like culture if you want to call it that, has an emphasis on being well rounded, you know, helping out in the community and this and that. And I sort of incorporated that, in, what I do as well. And, so, I think I took what I like about both cultures and sort of put it together I try [...] to be objective about looking at both cultures and take what's best out of both of them and then incorporate it into my life... (Beth)

... I'm a strong believer that it's important to, to...uh, uh, maintain your tie, to your culture. Um...so, it's hard because it's very hard to juggle between two cultures. Um, I think that's where difficulty comes with a lot of people. It's...you know, sort of choosing one, to um, to associate with more. I think for myself I've chosen the Canadian culture, uh, over my, my, my Chinese background, ALTHOUGH, I maintain very strong ties with the, with my background mainly because of my parents, you know, and my involvement with my family here...I'm sort of blessed in that sense that, you know I have people who I CAN interact with to sort of maintain that tie. But I know that for a lot of ESL students, um, they are here by themselves, so it's hard, uh, for them, to maintain both cultures. So they will have to make that decision, of, choosing one...(Gabriel)

4-4-2 Living between two worlds

Questions about preferences in marriage partners and the place they wish to raise their children in the future were also asked in order to confirm their views on identity.

The majority of responses pertaining to the place of choice in raising their children

concurred with participants' positive views toward owning two cultures. That is, the majority wished for their children to become bicultural.

I think more Canadian. Because I'll definitely want to raise my children here, now and eh, um, but I do want them to learn Chinese, because you know, no matter who or what personality or nationality of the person I marry, eh, my kids are going to be half Chinese at least right, it's important I think to them that they know a bit about their Chinese heritage and eh, at least, they don't need to speak fluent Chinese but, at least they can understand me, right, so when I talk to them they'll, they'll understand what I'm saying and that, that's important to me, yep. (Ulrika)

Oh, I thought about too, I think I'll, I would send them back to Taiwan for education say until grade 7, and then, and then start grade 8 here (laugh)...I wouldn't want just either one. Cus' for me myself like both right? I think only one wouldn't be better than both. (Lora)

Likewise, when asked about their preferences in marriage partners, the majority responded more favorably toward those that are bicultural in background.

...I will probably marry a Korean who's been here a long time. Um, because if I want to have a conversation with them about something about um, something really serious that I can't really quite express in Korean, I would want him to understand and um, express his opinion fully as well. So um, I'm thinking that I would like to marry a banana (laugh), it sounds so weird that I marry a banana, um, but, yeah. (Heather)

They added that issues of commonality in culture mostly motivated their preferences in marriage partners.

...I think I'll prefer Chinese. Yeah, cus', well, I don't, like, I'm not like, I don't want Caucasian (laugh) or anything, but it's just that, I do feel it's really hard, it's almost impossible, yeah. (Julie)

...I think it would be easier...to get to know someone who was CBC (Canadian born Chinese) and we can have a lot more in common...so...you...you'd...Like...You'd probably have...uh...have...more opportunities to get to know them right...(Maia)

This section has highlighted the impact of English on the identities of the participants. English has opened the door to a new culture and a new sense of self. Almost all-13 out of 14-participants considered themselves bicultural; however, they felt more comfortable socializing with those from their first cultures. They generally found socializing with Canadian born peers difficult because of a lack of shared interests. Nevertheless, they managed to maintain a bicultural status through the use of English.

4-5 Participants' advice

The academic pressure and difficulties faced by participants were clearly significant. They were however, overshadowed by the social difficulties they encountered. The following section documents participants' advice for ESL teachers, parents, and future ESL students. They were quick to offer advice for teachers and parents that would help ESL students to succeed. A theme that was developed in this section was participants' call for more focus on the social difficulties that ESL students are prone to face. Other specific learning techniques are also discussed.

4-5-1 Social interaction

We asked participants what they felt were some of the most vital contributing factors to their success. The most prominent factor they identified was social interactions. They attributed their success in overcoming social and academic difficulties to trustworthy and affirming friends who were willing to struggle together with them.

I feel eh...more comfortable talking to them (fellow ESL students) in English because they, I, I feel they won't judge me because they, they are ESL students themselves for once before right, I feel more comfortable talking to them...(Ulrika)

Um, of course you know I made some friends, um, the Chinese people they were really nice to me because they knew what I was going through. And uh, they were always you know, comforting me and meet with me. Of course I don't remember what they said, I, I probably don't know what they said um, but I was really, I felt so blessed that they um, they were there with me...I think it was about May that another Korean girl came to school. And uh, and her being there with me was just hu (expression of relief) you know. Cus' before I couldn't, I was really shy. People thought I was shy but, now I could reveal my true identity to them you know, "look I can laugh and stuff you know" (laugh). So um, that was also really lucky that um, she came along...(Heather)

Similarly, Ani suggested that finding trustworthy friends who also offer emotional support was a way that enabled her to succeed.

At least we struggled together. Because they were still like, yeah they were still ESL kids and then, we'll, I was, when I don't know how to do something, I would try to ask them, and then they would try to answer me but then still the communication still a problem, you know, because I didn't speak their language and then I don't understand what they, when they talk to me in Mandarin. But then still, I guess we struggled together and then we'll face the teacher together, if not that's difficult, like facing the teacher alone, like I'll be scared. But then I'll pull a friend with me and then we'll go ask the teacher. I guess yeah, that helped.

Evidence here suggested that most seemed to interact mostly with peers from ESL programs. Because they tended to find the support and comfort they need in ESL programs, it is not surprising they reported feeling excluded from the mainstream; hence, a vicious cycle was created as their Canadian born counterparts perceived them as a separate school body of their own. However, this does not imply that all held negative views toward their mainstream peers. Some commented on the immeasurable amount of gratitude they have towards their supportive Canadian born friends:

...this one girl I remember, Canadian girl, she was, she was this really great um, um, she was popular, and um, I remember back then thinking that I'm...sort of a nobody you know. And um, although I was, I wasn't really in the center of attention, she was always speaking to me, she was

always laughing with me, making jokes and um, I really appreciate what she's done for me because she may not realize it now, but she was this, great big influence for me. And um, she, improved a lot of my uh, speaking skills as well...I would recommend having a few people but not like this whole big group that you can stick with forever, but just this one or two people that you can sort of rely on when you're tired, when you're frustrated. (Heather)

... I learned most of my English from that um, through having Caucasian friends and stuff, cus' there was this one girl that was really nice to me and then, you know, we were very friendly, was, she was different from the others, saying that you know, to, exclude me from, from lots of, she, she was totally different, she will, she will include me and everything you know, she'll teach me every single cultural thing that was going on and, she was just very, very nice to me...(Mari)

Seeing through their experiences, it became clear that fulfilling the sense of belonging was fundamental to their academic success and social integration. Having been aware of that need, some explored possibilities that would provide them with the sense of belonging. Sports was one of the avenues that enabled many of them to progress.

Anything at all...Um, I really wanted to fit in to the lifestyle here. So, you know, I knew that sports is a big part of life here, uh...whereas it wasn't in HK, so, I'm...you know, I made it a point to...to learn, you know, various different sports, but uh I enjoyed it too, so that made it a little easier so, now I enjoy all kinds of sports, well so that was one of the goals, to learn the games, you know, to, to be able to interact with other people who played the game. (Gabriel)

I tried out for the school team there and I made the school team, so most of the school team like most of, yeah most of the people in the school teams were Caucasians so through that, like through that channel, I got to know them and then, so they were friends with me then you know I got invited to the parties and stuff like that...and plus, cus' I didn't, and still at that time I didn't know [...] cultural stuff right, so I'll be making like some foolish mistakes or like you know, or, or be the joke of the day or sort of thing, but that wasn't really bad cus' they weren't really making fun of you, like I can sense that they weren't making fun of me, they were just laughing because I did something funny, then, then, when they explained it to me I would laugh myself right, so yeah, that was fun...(Mari)

Fitting in socially was a major theme in this study. Participants reported a great deal of determination in seeking opportunities to integrate into a foreign environment. In the process they encountered issues of insecurity and segregation. Nevertheless, they persisted with the support from family, ESL friends, and their own diligence to overcome trials.

4-5-2 Advice for ESL students

Participants were asked to offer advice to help current and future ESL students to succeed. They shared various specific methods and techniques that they employed. There was an apparent theme underlying their suggestions; that is, ESL students should be self-motivated and proactive.

It's wanting, wanting to know the language, like I've always wanted to be, you know, wanted to know English, to be, fluent in English, to, to you know, be able to write well in English. And, yeah I think that motivation is definitely very important. To want, to know it, to want to improve yourself. (Beth)

...yourself I think. It's, it's the way you wanna do things. No one can force you to do anything you don't wanna to right so, if you, eh, lack that motivation or desire to succeed then, it's, it's, it'll be a miracle if you succeed...I think, eh, eh, students themselves should, should be the person who should be, the, sole responsibility for their own success so if they, if they try hard enough, then they have that will, they will succeed, I think, yeah. (Ulrika)

Most asserted that it is the responsibility of students to seek opportunities that lead them to success. The following examples demonstrate participants' determination to achieving their goal of learning English.

...just practicing a lot um, meeting Canadian friends or English speaking friends...opportunities you take them, they're not totally given, you have to go grab opportunities. If they haven't taken the opportunities to meet

English speaking friends, or to use it, to use their English, then, that's their loss. (Celeste)

I wanted to like, can like sort of, can be in one of them, yeah. So I like tried and tried (laugh), yeah. So um, that's why I started um, I had a part-time job, in "ABC restaurant"...you know I had a chance to like go into like, some, Chinese company, you know that's Chinese speaking. But I know, I wanted to learn English, so, I applied for a job (at ABC restaurant). (Lora)

They offered some practical suggestions, some of which included: asking questions and for help, interacting with English speakers, reading and watching television.

...asking a lot of question, uh, you know, JUST ASK whenever you don't understand! Ask questions! That's very important. Uh, ASK your teacher, ASK your friends, ASK your parents if they can help...ASKING questions and interacting with other people. (Gabriel)

I think get help. Like when you don't understand something, try to get help as soon as possible. Like don't really, like leave it. Because things, like the problems will come back and haunt you, I think. Like for example, if you don't understand something, yeah, just try to get help as soon as possible, and really understand like, go through the stuff, like things will build up...(Ani)

They suggested that not only should ESL students ask for direction, they should also place an emphasis on acquiring clarification and meaning.

I had to really try hard to understand everything. Instead of, um, just spitting out information...I really have to understand, what the teacher's saying and understand what I'm reading. I had to try hard to do that, so I would, in terms of advice, I would say...you know, really try to understand what you're learning, um, instead of memorizing, instead of just memorizing because, I know of a lot of people, who don't understand, something, they're just memorizing, and spit it back out, you know, during exam time. So, uh I think what helped me was because I really tried to learn the language, I really tried to understand what I was learning. (Gabriel)

I tried to relate the subject that I was studying to the things that I actually cared for...when I was learning like English, ESL, I was think that how

much I love literature and how much I love writing. Um, because before I came to Canada, I was writing stories and poems and stuff in Korean. So I was determined that one day I would do all of that stuff in English. Um, so, that's pretty much all I did. I don't remember studying my butt off. I don't remember studying um, until 3 am in the morning or anything like that. (Heather)

The data showed that in ESL classes, they looked mostly to those that spoke their first language or others that shared similar experiences. They also revealed the contradictory nature of some of their responses. For example, 10 out of 14 suggested that ESL students should spend more time socializing with English speakers.

...the biggest um, piece of advice would be to, make a lot of friends who speak in English fluently, and to be around them as much as possible.
(Beth)

...I would say that, um...probably, always put yourself in a situation where you have to use English. Cause if you're getting used to like your group of friends that speak your language only, you're not going to be able to practice it, cause, practice doesn't make it perfect but at least it makes it fluent so, um, I think that's pretty important to forcing yourself to actually be in a situation where you have to do it. (Julie)

...you have to practice it all the time, that's with any language, it's just practicing a lot um, meeting Canadian friends or English speaking friends...I took a course with toastmasters, um, and I thought that was helpful...it's sort of like a group where you're speaking a lot...I think they should take a part time job...like a part time job that involves speaking a lot, like with customer service, um, because if they're familiar and are not afraid and are confident to speak with strangers... If you're speaking to, customer, you're, you're more conscious of what you're doing um, and, you would think to say the right words, and you would think um, to say proper phrases, being conscious of that and, and putting effort into that before you say certain things helps them a lot. (Celeste)

In addition to speaking, they also emphasized the importance of reading. Nine out of 14 suggested that reading was a key to their success mainly because "it actually [gives] a lot of ideas for writings and...understanding what people [are] saying cause sometimes they

have dialogues...you could like, look at...It's a lot of material combined together that helps you understand the language more." (Julie) Others suggested reading because:

...library books are free. You know, you can just and go and borrow as many as you want, as many as you can read. And, that would really I think help. (Beth)

I like reading a lot, and you know, Chinese, English anything I read, so, so it was basically you know, I remember we had these pamphlets of like for, I don't know, it was some kind of book sales or something you could order books from like through the school, kind of thing, so they have uh like once month or something like that, so I would always get my dad to buy like this big pile of books...(Mari)

Well I had to force myself to read, and to memorize vocabularies. That was, these two were like the most, well, as far as I can remember yeah, the two most important things I did. (Hugo)

The majority seemed to have enjoyed reading. Even those that forced themselves to read recognized the effectiveness of reading in their English acquisition process.

Another popular means of learning and improving English was watching television. Nine out of 14 participants highly recommended watching television.

According to them, television was helpful because it was a tool that enabled them to contextualize the English language and hear standard English spoken. The way in which they learned English through television was, indeed, fascinating.

I tell my students to go rent movies because by watching movie is something they're interested in doing and when they are interested in doing, you know when they're learning, that's when you learn. I watch t.v. and I learned a lot, it serves two purposes again: one, it serves the purpose of um, because, because they're on t.v. um, like someone, like the news or discussion program, because in the media, they have to speak proper English...[you] know, you're learning the proper pronunciation, while you are also learning about Canadian culture...(Celeste)

And, and I watched tons of TV in the free time...I left the captions on because it, it made me, made it easier for me to understand what was going on, and I know a lot of people actually told me not to leave the caption on because they thought it would interfere with, um, my, my improving my listening skills. But I, actually found that to be, contrary to my experience. Because, uh, when you don't know anything, doesn't matter what, what sounds you hear, and that doesn't make any sense, and, when you actually see the words, then, then eventually you recognize the sound, then, then you know the words. (Robert)

...what I do remember doing is um, watching a lot of T.V. because as far as conversations and um, things like that go, I was uh, I knew that watching T.V. was probably the best thing I could do. And uh, my favorite T.V. show, the Power Rangers, um, (laugh), um, I learned a lot of stuff from that as well. And a lot of um, um, I knew like how to say bad things, because you know all the evil people are saying bad things, all the good people saying good things and, yeah, um, the good thing about children's program is that they speak in perfect grammar...(Heather)

Finally, participants suggested that ESL students should be open to their new culture.

Some asserted that being receptive to Canadian culture was fundamental to their integration process.

...they should be very open to suggestions um, comments and criticisms, if they're not, and that's sort of in different dimensions of being open, if they are not open to language, if they close themselves out, if they're still in there situation where "oh, I don't want to be here at all", then um, you know, then they will be rejecting the learning process, if they're not open to criticisms and suggestions of their English learning skill and when people correct them um, they think "oh are you belittling me?" (Celeste)

...I think integrating yourself into the culture and being able to be flexible and accepting of things within the culture I think really important. Because, um, when I look at ESL students, and, especially if you're Chinese Canadian or, you know, or a Chinese immigrant coming here, it's much easier to hang on to the culture like you mentioned. And I think that could lead to the students de-tri-detriment in some way. I mean there are a lot of Chinese students that are very intelligent, that go really far, and...I think they, they stop themselves a lot of times, because, or they stunt themselves because they're around Chinese students all the time. And so, they never have the need to learn English, you know. And, and, this, their,

their native language is used like a crutch, and, and, that, that's not to their advantage I think. (Beth)

you're always around these ESL students and you'll never want to get out of it you know, not out of ESL, but out of this group of totally, totally Chinese or whatever, you know, where ever they came from you know. Not that you shouldn't be around these people but, you know there's, there's another side of it you know, don't resent the Caucasians you know cus', cus' you're around Chinese people, yeah that's, I think that's my advise, I think. Open like, open their eyes to more things. (Mari)

4-5-3 Advice for parents

Participants were also asked to offer suggestions for parents of ESL students.

Interestingly, they did not suggest that parents should ease the pressure. Their advice for parents concerned issues of support. They felt strongly about the following: parents taking interest in their children's lives, offering encouragement and support, and learning together with their children.

...not, not leave your kids with homestays I think, I think that's a terribly bad idea...usually those kids are, I think, I don't know if they are successful or not I, I don't really have the statistics but, I would think that their kids would have, eh, harder time trying to adjust, to the whole school and transition then eh, those kids who have parents with them, right, and also there's, it's just when you're a teenager, there are a lot of issues that, that are going on, if your parents are not there, like, like a lot of kids they smoke, they do drugs, they get drunk or whatever, and eh your parents are not around then they don't have those people to, to, look after them and they feel free to do everything they want and they may, try, you know, think it's more important for them to hang out with their friends then to stay in school. I, I knew couple of friends of mine who eh, ended up dropping out from school and eh, when their parents, was starting to realize those problems are happening, it's too late right, their kids were already eh, de, detached from them for such a long time and they feel I can do whatever I want and you can't, there's just nothing you can do about it and, and eventually the parents try everything they could, it's just too late right...(Ulrika)

Six out of 14 reported one of their parents regularly traveled between Canada and their country of origin. They suggested that parents can offer their children tremendous amount of comfort and serve as safety nets for participants in a strange land.

...I'm a big fan of encouragement, so I'd say you know, "Parents, just encourage your kids," um, you know, don't....don't get mad at them, you know, they, when they make mistakes, or when they don't do well, and they should be, because, you know, ITS HARD, (LAUGHS) to, to, be able to put in a new place and learning a new language, meeting new people. So, just, you know, encourage them. That's one thing that, that I would say parents should do. (Gabriel)

Many revealed their desire for parental support. They suggested that in order to offer support, parents should understand their experiences. Despite the rigidity in parents' expectations, participants enjoyed their company during their journeys.

... My parents would try to get to...like learn more vocabulary. Like...they'd be like "ok...read me a story" kind of or like..."Let's...let's have a...have a...a race...you know. Who could write down the days of the week the fastest...right...and I just remember like little things like that...um is that...that...yeah...they were pretty supportive...(Maia)

...it's like, the parents do adjust too, so...Um, I think that's a good thing with, um, parents being here to, with the, the kids cause they see what the kids going through, they're going through my ss-my, like themselves, cause my mom she's going to school now. So she understand how difficult it was for us to study English and stuff. And so, um, even though if we have a disagreement we would like eventually work it out cause like, if, um, we are, let's say, we're growing here. That, then, the, they are growing along with us. So, they will see what we're going through and stuff like that. (Julie)

4-5-4 Advice for ESL teachers

Participants highlighted similar themes of care and support when asked to give advice for ESL teachers. They suggested, for instance, that ESL teachers should place more effort in understanding students' needs in order to become better at encouraging

them. Other suggestions included implementing small group discussions, making the content meaningful, and offering more challenges in class. It should be noted that 13 out of 14 spoke positively about their ESL teachers. The advice they offered was based on their positive experiences and the standards that they wished to see other teachers set in their ESL classes.

They reported that teachers sometimes taught to a standard curriculum without considering their individual needs. Subsequently some felt they were unable to progress as speedily as they had hoped.

But in term of like um, grammar, writing, I don't know, the, the way they teach the grammar or something, you feel like they don't know you, they don't know what you need to know. They just teach you what they think you should know right, yeah. They don't get to the point that, what you wanna know (laugh), yeah cus' some of the stuff I think I already know before, I want to learn something new, or some of the stuff that I didn't, I didn't know, I want to learn it. But they just go, I think, I think it's probably because of the class size, it's not like small group or anything, we had about 20 students in, it's, it's, it's hard to, it's kind of impossible to get to know everyone, yeah. It's probably because that, yeah. But you know I do, I do think they should hand out some kind of survey or anything like for each other to fill out, say what you want to know, or what you don't want to know...(Lora)

...I had a, little bit of trouble with the ESL teacher at the beginning because um, I was, I was at a point in my life, you know as far as age goes, it was where I wanted to read about something deep, you know something emotional, something you know, that was just me and I love emotional stuff. And, the first um, the first book I read was about 3 bears um, having a nice time out in the woods and uh, just didn't appreciate that. (Heather)

Some did not offer any advice because they were very satisfied with their ESL teachers.

They responded to our request for advice by sharing how their teachers' instructions had been so positive.

...it was just the encouragement that they gave you, um, um, yeah...that helped me a lot, at least, um, even when we didn't speak fluently, they were, they were very, they were very encouraging, you know, uh, helping us, and, telling us that, "oh, you're doing," that you're doing very well, you know, um, you know, they would correct our mistakes, but you know, they weren't, it didn't come down as in, you know, as in, uh, as a discouragement because they didn't do it in a way that would discourage you, that was, they were very helpful. So encouragement, was one of the big things. (Gabriel)

Ulrika offered the interesting point that even though she felt sometimes that her ESL teacher did not teach topics of her liking, the positive environment enabled her to remain in the class with a positive attitude.

Well, one, they are very supportive. They are always smiling, they, they don't make you uncomfortable when you look to them and ask them questions and that's really important, you feel that you can ask them anything and, and you can ask them for help in any, any way if you wanna um, talk to them about some issues, or if you want them to prove-read your essay or whatever, they would do it for you and then they're very nice people they always smile and, and eh, they don't judge you and uh, they appreciate the culture and the way that you were brought up, so they would not try to change you or anything so, that, that's very good. So uh, even though uh, the way they taught things wasn't really the plan I had in mind, but because they try to do their best and they make you feel comfortable and made you wanna, at least I, I, feel going to school is a very enjoyable thing, not a drag in life or anything so, so that's good, at least they achieve this positive learning space for you, yeah.

A part of being a supportive ESL teacher is the willingness to listen to students, as Lora suggested.

Um, well they, they listen to you, like, you, you can feel like they, they wanna listen to you, they wanna talk to you, yeah. That, that makes a difference, like a lot (laugh), big difference, yeah

More importantly, a supportive teacher is the one who sees the potential within the students. Heather noted:

Uh, she didn't think I was stupid. It's, some ESL teachers, not all of them, but some of them just assume that just because we don't speak the language, mean, it means that we're naturally stupid. Um, she thought I was uh, she, she thought I was a really intelligent person and she appreciated my um, my talents you know, I liked music and, I liked you know, stuff. And she appreciated all that and, um, she never like laughed at any of my mistakes or you know she never got mad at me for um, not understanding what she said. She was always patient, she was always there with me um, right on track you know, always um, making sure that I understood everything and just going really slow but going accurately one by one and step by step. And that was, that was great.

Finally, advice that most participants agreed upon was the need to implement small group discussions and learning. Six out of 14 participants felt strongly about small groups.

...I think my ESL teacher actually helped us a lot because we were always into this debates and stuff...(Mari)

...usually in the ESL class they just go about it in the normal way then in any regular class would, just a teacher standing in front and student sit under and then write notes and stuff. But I think it's more important that they eh, do it sort of in a small group thing, and, and then talk, force the students to talk and think, and they may be uncomfortable and stressed they, you know, they may not like the idea but I think that's the only way that, that can force them to think and stimulate their brain more. So eh, be more interactive in terms of teaching I guess. (Ulrika)

4-6 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined perceptions of the effects of significant factors to participants' success: academic achievement, backgrounds, ESL experiences and immigration process, and views on identity. In addition, participants' views of success were also examined through the advice they offered to ESL students, parents, and teachers.

It appeared overall that these individuals faced tremendous challenges as ESL students. Moreover, the pressure and high expectations applied by their parents further

complicated their experiences. It was clear that parents were mainly responsible for defining participants' views of success. Surprisingly, they were not resentful of parents. On the contrary, most were appreciative of their efforts and discipline. It was interesting that the definition of success participants applied on other ESL students differed from the ones they obediently followed themselves.

Aside from parental influence, participants' previous educational experiences also played a significant role in shaping their views of success. Their educational experiences from their first culture instilled in them the concept of hard work. However, the most profound impact was their ESL and immigration experiences. Their experiences fueled their determination to succeed academically and socially.

Questions pertaining to identity were also discussed. It was clear that identities underwent major changes. Almost all commented positively when asked how they felt about their lives in between various identities.

This chapter concluded with practical advice. It is hoped that parents and practitioners find the given advice useful for assisting future ESL students in navigating through the complex and difficult experiences of being ESL students.

Chapter 5

Discussion

While the findings of this study varied and seemed sometimes contradictory, a general trend surfaced. Participants' experiences illustrated the profound effects of socio-cultural factors in the changes in their identities and their academic success. This chapter focuses on the socio-cultural factors that helped and hindered their integration into Canadian society and the British Columbia school system. This discussion relies on relevant literature from the areas of socio-cultural identity, socio-political theory in education, and language socialization. More specifically, the discussion is guided by Schieffelin and Ochs' model of language socialization (1986a, 1986b) and Norton's (1995, 1997) notion of investment.

Socio-cultural identity

Linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge are acquired through social activities. Hence, linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge are interrelated and interdependent. Inevitably, it is also through this process that one negotiates a sense of identity. Findings showed that the social and cultural conventions of participants' first cultures had a profound influence on their views of success and identity. At the heart of their socio-cultural practices was the concept of interpersonal relationships within the family and these relationships were inextricably linked to their identities and their academic success. This proved to be of a particular importance because participants' notion of self was determined mainly by the success of their relationships at home. In

addition, successful relationships with their families were partly determined by their academic success. That is, a successful relationship with their parents was primarily built on obeying and meeting parental demands for academic performance. Pleasing parents was a dominant theme that emerged from the data. It was a concept that had been cemented in their minds as all expressed their sense of duty to the ineludible expectations of their parents. Interestingly, the success of their relationships at home contributed, to some degree, to their success in exiting ESL programs and entering a university. The following sections examine the various factors that affected participants' views of success and changes in their identities.

“The ghost of Confucianism” (Yuen, 2001)

...[You're] suppose to be hard working...because you're suppose to live up to those um, expectations...traditionally. (Celeste)

...with our culture, it wasn't, you know, there was LAUGH, there won't be a lot of communication, uh...you just do what your parents tell you to do basically. (Gabriel)

What lies beneath these words is the Confucian philosophy that tacitly governs the Asian perception of the world and their relations to one another, especially parents. It is generally no longer explicitly taught in classrooms; however, its ideas permeate Asian thought and life. Not considered a religion, nonetheless, it occupies the central part of the social fabric in the modern day East Asian countries of Korea, China, Japan, and their neighbors. Confucianism has been and still is the Chinese moral fabric interconnected by a system of philosophies, ideas, practices, and habits (Berthrong, 2000). It has governed the cultural and social traditions of the Chinese as well as its Korean and Japanese

neighbors. "...Confucian culture has saturated the Korean people's lives and is the core of Korean culture [and social network]" (Tu, 1996, p. 225). Similarly, Confucian tradition still provides the core value in the multireligious society of Japan. For example, "[the] family system [is] often regarded as synonymous with the ethical system...[reflecting] Confucian ethical notions" (Tu, 1996, p. 167). This system carries a patriarchal quality by emphasizing obedience and piety toward parents.

Confucianism is often characterized as a system of social and ethical philosophies. It is regarded as "primarily a system of ethical precepts for the proper management of society" (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2000). It envisages man as a social creature who is bound to "a set of defined roles and mutual obligations ... [starting] from individual and family" (Berling, 1982). According to Confucian teaching, successful individual and family relationships reform and perfect society. One of the primary values in Confucianism is the concept of filial piety whereby an individual's relationships with his/her parents is regarded as the foundation of all human relationships. The concept of filial piety entails that no disobedience or wrong-doing should ever be committed against parents. Instead, one's actions and conduct should be in accordance with parents' wishes and expectations in order to preserve harmony and order of a hierarchical family relationship. In Zia's book (2000) she described how the notion of filial piety was exercised in her household.

Our home [was] the center of everything. This conveniently matched the Confucian notion of family, whereby the father, as patriarch, is the master of the university. In our household it was understood that no one should ever disobey, contradict, or argue with the patriarch, who, in the Confucian hierarchy, is a stand-in for God. My mother, and of course the children, were expected to obey God absolutely.

It was clear that Confucian thought manifested itself through participants' perceptions of their success. Regardless of their ages and their ages upon arrival, the concept of filial piety permeated their responses. That is, all expressed a strict adherence to parental wishes as their natural duty. This was in accordance with Confucian teaching that states:

"Those today who are filial are considered so because they are able to provide for their parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect your parents, what is the difference?" (2.7 Ames & Rosemont, 1998)

In addition to providing for their parents, individuals must also treat them with utmost respect, placing their wishes above their own desires. If not, their treatment of their parents would be equated to farmers offering their livestock only the bare essentials. Naturally, success was defined not only by meeting the expectations of their parents, but always striving to accomplish more than what was expected. This notion is also derived from Confucian teaching that instructs children to "[give parents] nothing to worry about beyond [their] physical well-being" (2.6 Ames & Rosemont, 1998). In other words, children should always strive to attain higher goals, thereby, sparing their parents the burden of worrying about their futures. In many cases, participants in the study felt that entering university represented only the first step to meet their parents' expectations. In addition, many defined success as the ability to graduate from a university and enter into a high-paying profession.

There was no question that parents played a significant role in determining success and shaping identity. Because success in life and personal identity was mainly determined by their relationships with their parents, they were often under severe pressure to uphold the unwritten law of filial piety. According to Ames & Rosemont

(1998), the substance of filial piety lies in the "face". A child must bring to filial responsibility the display of goodwill and a cheerful heart. This practice is mostly concerned with formality, down to appropriate facial expressions and physical gestures. It was, therefore, not surprising to learn that parents demanded high grades, a prestigious university, and an elite social status. These were open displays of their children's ability and achievements, a way in which some of the parents' own aspirations were realized through the lives of their children. This part of the data coincided with the concept of ancestors living through their descendants, a familiar concept in most Confucian-based Asian cultures (Yep, 1998).

It may be surprising to some that parental expectations were met with very little resistance. This was because behind the strict adherence to parental demands echoed the Confucian idea that:

In serving your father and mother, remonstrate with them gently. On seeing that they do not heed your suggestions, remain respectful and do not act contrary. Although concerned, voice no resentment. (4.18 Ames & Rosemont, 1998)

This attitude towards parents carries both positive and negative consequences. It may prevent children from expressing what they feel to be important. On the other hand, it assures parental support as it places great responsibilities on the parents to provide their children guidance.

It may seem contradictory to attribute the notion of filial piety to participants' success, however, the author wishes to speculate here that this very notion may have been a contributing factor to their academic achievement. Dictated by the strong force of filial piety, they were given very little voice and opportunity for self-actualization. This suggests that parents, to some degree, were in charge of their daily progress by being

aware of their academic progress and involved in the shaping of their identities. The majority mentioned that they had lived with their parents since their arrival to Canada. This is noteworthy because they also identified that a lack of family support was the cause of failure of many of their immigrant classmates. They believed that their parents served as the source of emotional and material support necessary for their success. This explains why their sense of duty to their parents remained very strong. Although their successes and identities were built and constructed, to some degree, by their parents through the confines of Confucian teaching, they also provided the much needed motivation and discipline to succeed.

Between the worlds of Me and We

The data presented a very interesting contradictory point when comparing the definitions of success participants applied to themselves and the definition they applied to other ESL students. This comparison revealed the tension they experienced while living in a Western culture with the strong force of Eastern philosophy guiding their lives. The differences in socio-cultural priority created a tension in their identities as they found themselves torn between their responsibilities to family and to themselves.

Success was defined as meeting parents' demand for them to obtain high marks in order to exit ESL programs quickly and enter into a university. When asked to define the characteristics of other successful ESL students, however, grades were considered secondary to learning process and effort. Many suggested that understanding the material and making their learning process meaningful were far more important than superior grades through cramming and memorizing materials.

...I think cramming is not really good, LAUGHS, uh, and, I think, again the attitude thing, like I think...to learn it for what it is, and not just for marks, I think that...if you're just doing it for, uh, the checkmark, like, it's not, not really meaningful. I think if you get the context of why you're learning, like English, or why you're doing these stupid little exercises, [it] gives you more appreciation for why you're doing things, like doing these exercises and stuff. (Naomi)

Participants recognized the importance of self-actualization through meaningful encounters with the curriculum, and all were eager to advise others to engage in contextualized learning. On the other hand, however, they were unable to escape their responsibility to their families to become the "ideal child". Hence, grades were always more important than process. A similar tension was also raised by Cho Van Riesen (in Yep, 1998), a Korean-American. She offered an explanation for the contrary views often held by children and their parents. According to Cho Van Riesen, immigrant parents and children struggle to communicate because parents often may not share the same North American culture and values. Cho Van Riesen gave an example of a friend who expressed to her mother the desire to do something after college that "would help her to get in touch with who she really was", not an unusual notion in North American culture, where psychological self-understanding is often the focus. Her attempt to focus on the self, however, was met by the following reply: "I know who you are. You are my daughter. Study hard and get a good job" (Yep, 1998, p.60). Zia (2000) also explained the overwhelming pressure she faced as a Chinese-American daughter.

At age seventeen, I had never knowingly disobeyed my father. I policed myself, turning down dates, invitations to parties, and even educational opportunities away from home, because I thought Dad would disapprove. I was caught between two conflicting [ideals]. [Confucius' teaching] demanded subservience from females, but the primacy of education taught me to seek advancement through study. My American side told me to heed my own call" (p. 13).

Her experience mirrored the experience of many participants in this study. The differences in parents' and participants' conceptions of success and identity clearly demonstrated the clash between the socio-cultural values of the West versus the East. Sandwiched between the concept "Me" and "We", participants struggled (or perhaps are still struggling) to survive the battle between the opposing concepts of "Do what you desire and your parents will support you" versus "So-and-so is studying at Harvard and becoming a doctor, how that makes their parents so happy".

Illegitimate voices

Participants overcame great hurdles to meet the demands of parents and to integrate into a world that was built on opposing views they learned in their countries of origin. The pressures of living up to parental demands and living between two opposing worlds were the seeds from which the issue of insecurity grew. They expressed their confidence in their command of English, however, many suggested that they rarely associated with friends outside of an Asian circle due to feelings of inferiority toward their Canadian born peers. Insecurities arose because they faced different expectations, goals, and circumstances than their Canadian born counterparts in a new dominant culture. Moreover, those in the mainstream did not understand their identities as ESL students and were often unable to sympathize with their experiences as immigrants.

According to Ishiyama (1989), when the surroundings do not provide affirmation to one's self-identity, the person may experience insecurity whereby s/he becomes hesitant to speak. In the case of participants, what made their journeys difficult was the lack of affirmation they received. They were voiceless in their own homes and at school.

That is, parental support came in the form of academic pressure and demands, while entering into the mainstream required learning a new set of socio-cultural knowledge and language. Encouragement and affirmation came mainly from ESL teachers and other students. They reported that they received very little support from their Canadian born peers, mostly due to their ESL status and the geographical location of their ESL classrooms. It was suggested that Canadian born students did not want to associate with ESL students because they did not share similar interests and communication was difficult. In addition, what contributed most to the apparent division between the two groups was the geographical location of the ESL classrooms. In many schools, ESL students spent the majority of their time in an area of their school designated for ESL classes. This forced all ESL students to congregate together and consequently, communication between ESL students and those in mainstream classes were kept to a minimum, therefore, providing very little opportunities for exchanges of cultural ideas and social values. Although some areas of schools were designated for ESL programs, participants perceived those areas as the representation of their failure to fit into the mainstream.

Moreover, participants felt their teachers in mainstream classes often failed to meet their psychological and academic needs because of cultural misunderstandings. According to Tett (2000), "teachers make assumptions about building upon home literacy experiences but have little idea of what actually happens in the local culture" (p. 123). Teachers and mainstream students were ill-informed about participants' experiences as ESL students and the pressures and confusions they faced as immigrants. The lack of affirmation from the dominant culture, in turn, fostered their feelings of inferiority and

exclusion from the rest of the student body. This led to a vicious circle whereby participants were perceived to be "cliquey" and therefore, further excluded by the mainstream. The feelings of insecurity and exclusion further fuelled their resistance to speak with their Canadian born peers because exposing their ESL status would further alienate them from the rest of the student body. Subsequently, participants remained "voiceless with their experience interpreted on their behalf by others, [while] their own meanings are rendered illegitimate and disqualified" (Tett, 2000, p. 127). Without encouragement and affirmation from people outside of the ESL program, it was inevitable for them to cling to each other. Unfortunately, being a member of the ESL program represents their failure to fit into the mainstream. The lack of affirmation from the mainstream forced them into a lost space where they struggled to become members of a new society. It is therefore, essential for ESL programs to focus on assisting ESL students in overcoming feelings of insecurity in the dominant culture by recognizing and building on their prior cultural resources, experiences and knowledge in all instructions (Knobel, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997). Furthermore, teachers should "[encourage] students to affirm, tell, and retell their personal narratives by exercising their own voices" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.23).

Learning to speak and learning English

Participants suggested that learning English did not necessarily imply learning how to speak in their new environment. Their comments reflected Gee's (1989) words, "[it] is a truism that a person can know perfectly the grammar of a language and not know how to use that language" (Gee, 1989, p.5). Success was partly defined as acquiring the

ability to integrate into the Canadian culture and environment, whereas acquiring English was perceived as a task that they accomplished in the natural course of living in Canada, through which, English enabled them to achieve academic goals. Participants made a distinction between learning academic English and learning to speak in their social contexts. Learning English was the task associated with ESL programs whereas learning to speak encompassed their social activities outside of ESL classrooms.

I can't say that ESL programs really helped...because you know I would be reading stories of the caterpillars or something like that, and I didn't, we didn't really do anything that was um, I thought was effective, rather the interaction, the actual interaction, the practicing of English. Oh I had friends at church who were, who did help, some of them like a small group, they would correct my English um, I would ask them questions when I didn't understand certain things. Um, even, even after the initially year when I was growing up, because you know I grew up with them, when I didn't understand certain things I would ask and, um, I felt safe because I was in an environment where I could share, I could expose, um, expose that weakness of, in language. (Celeste)

In most cases, learning English implied translating words from English to their first languages, memorizing them, then, regurgitating them for exams. Learning to speak, on the other hand, was accomplished by participating in sporting events and finding employment at places where English was the sole language spoken. This perception concurred with Piper's (1985) observation:

[The immigrant learner] faces a home-school language switch of a quite different kind, one which involves switching to English from a language lacking social reinforcement and yet in which is invested much of his conceptual, emotional, and social development.

The divorce between the language and culture of home and school led to linguistic misunderstandings between teachers and students (Bourdieu, 1994).

Participants expressed their frustrations with learning what they felt were irrelevant

materials in ESL programs. They were unable to associate with their Canadian counterparts because they were struggling to acquire proficiency in the linguistic code of the dominant group in their social contexts. Academic English in ESL programs did not help participants understand opposing socio-cultural values and beliefs because it did not reflect their reality as immigrants and minorities (Macedo, 1994). Instead, they were given "stories of the caterpillars or something like that [to read]" in the ESL class (Celeste). Subsequently, some reported that their transition into mainstream classes was difficult. Despite gaining proficiency in the four basic skills of English, their English still differed from the mainstream due to a lack of knowledge in their new social world. For example,

...I can always remember they tell us to make more friends with Caucasian people with Canadians right, but they just tell us they don't show, they don't show us how right. You know it's really difficult. Even if like you say "hi" to the Canadian people or the other speak, English speaking people right, they might just say "hi" to you and that's it right (laugh)...So I would suggest the teacher like, to find some Canadian, who are willing to do like talk to us, yeah, who are willing to like learn from us too. Maybe they want to learn Chinese too right...(Lora)

This comment from Lora concurred with Grady's (1997) notion that "...no textbook space or 'practice' is given to the language that most ESL learners must learn in order to deal with the realities of being an immigrant..." (p. 7). All eventually transitioned into mainstream classes, however, their social and cultural values remained different from their mainstream counterparts. These differences reinforced the feeling that the education system belonged to another group (Apple 1996).

Learning (an)other culture

Research has focused on the inseparability of language and culture in the social context (Alvermann, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 2001; Gunderson, 2000; Heath, 1983; Kirk, 2001; Norton 2001, 1997, 1995). Norton (1995) asserted that language cannot be learned apart from reference to an individual's socio-cultural context.

Therefore, "communication competence should extend beyond an understanding of the appropriate rules of use in a particular society, to include an understanding of the way rules of use are socially and historically constructed..." (p. 18). Without the socio-cultural knowledge, participants were unable to "participate fully in the mainstream...within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors", even if they have acquired the basic skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language (Delpit, 1995, p. 45). The inability to participate fully in their new environment led the participants to believe that they were learning about (an)other culture, a culture belonging to their Canadian born counterparts, rather than learning within their own, new culture.

Participants recognized that the English they acquired did not necessarily allow them to gain membership into the mainstream. Much of their experiences as immigrants were filled with goals, expectations, and values that differed from Canadian culture. For example:

the one thing that you should realize about Korean, or Chinese people is, that they have this um, stereotype, just...just stuck in their head that after high school, university is the next step. It's naturally the next step, it's um, you know, I talk to people who have lived here for all their lives and they say, "maybe I'll take a year off", "maybe I'll go to a college, um, and then I'll transfer to an university and major in something else, maybe I'll do this, maybe I'll do that", and um, for me to um, listen to them and talk about their options and their different goals, um, for me it's not very

um...because my parents have told me um, since I was very little, to me and my sisters that after high school, it's university, a good university, not just any university...(Heather)

Like Heather, many felt that in comparison to their Canadian born peers, they had less freedom of choice. Instead, they felt the pressure of meeting the expectations and standards set by their families. They suggested the need for teachers and ESL programs to contextualize the curriculum to their social realities. This parallels Gee's notion that "comprehension of written and verbal language is as much about experience with the worlds of home, school, and work as it is about words" (Gee, 2001, p. 714). In order for teachers to bridge the gap between ESL students' home languages and cultures, they "must take interest in students languages and cultures, [otherwise] students will continue to fail to learn" (Gunderson, 2000). In addition, Delpit (1995) suggested that appropriate education for minority students should be devised only in consultation with adults who share their cultures. A big part of ESL students' success is dependent on the partnership and understanding between the students, teachers, and parents. In order to implement an effective pedagogy whereby language learners are socially situated into the language discourse that integrates language, beliefs, and values, the three parties must participate fully in the discussion of what kind of instruction is in students' best interest, without which, students will continue to learn about values and ideologies that they may never claim as their own.

The learning of Canada as (an)other set of socio-cultural values and rules was interpreted by participants as adding to their first cultures, thus, gaining the option to choose to exercise the proper values and rules in the appropriate context. Many

expressed the feeling of being on the outside looking in, but they responded positively toward learning a new set of socio-cultural knowledge.

...I think I've gained a lot as well from like, you know, in Canada. And I try to take both and...be objective about looking at both cultures and take what's best out of both of them and then incorporate it into my life. And as like, I think of myself as Japanese Canadian. And, as, as that, as a Japanese Canadian, I try to take the best of both cultures and, incorporate that into my life. (Beth)

This view coincided with Ogbu's (1992) findings which suggested that immigrant students perceive learning culture and language differences as barriers to overcome in order for them to achieve their long-term goals of obtaining good school and employment credentials. In some cases, participants made a conscious choice to perceive Canada as (an)other's country because it seemed that they had come to terms with the idea that they might never become "fully Canadian". Moreover, perceiving Canada as (an)other and refusing to view their identities as solely Canadian were methods of maintaining friendships and support network that were built around their first languages and ethnic identities (Goldstein, 1995; Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

Immigrant students' views of Canadian society and culture as belonging to others raise an interesting point for educators to consider. Although most participants commented on the difficulty of entering into the mainstream, they were also content on viewing Canada as (an)other. They wished to be part of the mainstream without being assimilated by the dominant culture. They viewed learning the language of the dominant culture as liberating because it enabled them to perceive their worlds through a new set of ideas and values. This is contrary to the notion proposed by Apple (1996), Freire (1995),

Freire & Macedo (1987), and Macedo (1994) that language of the dominant culture serves to oppress the minority.

...I realized that, no matter what happens and no matter how Canadian I feel, you know, I'm always going to be Japanese on the outside, and to the rest of the world I'll be Japanese. I'll be a Japanese girl. And so, so, yeah. So that's why, I feel it's important to retain my culture, to know my language, to be able to read and write and speak my own language, because on the outside I'm always going to be Japanese, there's nothing I can do about it. And so, just to make the best of that, and, because I think it's really sad when, a person who looks Japanese on the outside isn't able to speak their language or write, you know, I mean, it's such a waste, you, you have this chance, you know. This whole culture open to you and not take it. (Beth)

Segregation from their mainstream peers provided great difficulties in their integration process. However, it also served to strengthen their ties with their first cultures. This proved to have a positive effect because participants were not subjected to the ways of the dominant culture. Instead, fellow immigrant students in their ESL classes affirmed them as those developing a new identity. Although their ESL immigrant identity made their process of integrating into the mainstream difficult, paradoxically this identity also protected them from the dominant ideologies of the west.

The notion of investment

Participants viewed themselves as people from the outside looking in. Nevertheless, they managed to achieve competence and fluency in a new language and culture. How they managed to overcome adversity and achieve success can be explained by drawing on Norton's (1995; 1997) notion of investment. She suggested that when language learners invest in a second language, they are investing in the organizing and reorganizing of their own social identities. This investment gives learners access to a

wide range of resources, which in turn, allows them to position themselves in a new society. Participants often felt uncomfortable speaking English with their Canadian born peers due to their feelings of inferiority. Nevertheless, they persisted in improving their English because their identities as a subordinate to their parents provided the motivating force in their investment in learning English. It was not surprising that some participants strategically applied to work at places they knew to be occupied mostly by native speakers of English. Gaining language and cultural knowledge was the investment necessary to meet parental demands, overcome feelings of inferiority, and try to fit into the mainstream. Therefore, they perceived learning English as a long-term investment that would lead to relational, academic, and financial success. And success in these areas affirmed their identities at home, school, and society.

Any investment one makes requires resources and capital. In the participants' case, they seemed to have great financial resources at their disposal, which was one of the major contributing factors to their success. At no time during this project did the researchers ask them to comment on their socio-economic status, however, almost all referred to their parents as successful entrepreneurs or holders of high managerial positions. They expressed that financial resources were readily available to them. All had the resources to hire tutors (often times they would hire different tutors for each school subjects where help was needed) and purchase resources (including extracurricular materials to aid their studies).

The support from families and ESL teachers was also identified as having been the key to their success. Although their parents appeared to be strict and demanding, there was a sense that they experienced strong, intimate relationships at home. It was

noted that at times parents' expectations were difficult to meet, but they understood that those expectations were placed on them with good intentions. Parents further expressed their good intentions and demonstrated support by providing all the necessary resources to see their children succeed. Participants were never left alone to meet parental demands; rather, their parents appeared to have been closely involved in their social and academic lives. In addition to parental support, teachers also played a vital role in their achievements. Almost all commented on the helpfulness of their ESL teachers. In some cases they continued to seek out their ESL teachers for additional academic and emotional support after they had exited the ESL program. When we asked what kind of advice they would offer to parents and teachers, they wasted no time in informing us the critical need for parents and teachers to establish strong relationships with ESL students.

This study was limited to the views of successful students and the factors they identified as having helped them to succeed. Therefore, no comparisons were made with their less successful peers to clearly identify reasons behind the different outcomes in their academic achievement. However, from our participants, it was clear that the ingredients for their success was the combination of their strong values they place on education, strong work ethic, close relationships with families, teachers, and peers that shared their experiences. By investing in these areas, they were able to secure their identities at home, school, and in Canada.

Socialization as a key to language learning

The previous sections made clear the apparent contradiction in participants' responses regarding their views of the importance of interacting with native English

speakers. When asked what advice they would give ESL students, all suggested social interactions with Canadian born English speakers as the most critical factor in acquiring English. Contrary to their own advice, all admitted to rarely interacting with their Canadian born peers. In spite of the contradiction, it was clear that participants highly regarded socialization as a key to language learning. Their response reflected Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986 a; b) view that socialization is an interactional display between learners and the socio-cultural environment of the target language. However, in their case, they were not confined to a standard "Canadian" socio-cultural environment. Most expressed that they interacted mainly with other ESL students during and after school. This posed an interesting point that led us to examine further how participants acquired English and integrated into a multi-cultural environment.

Canada prides itself as being a multicultural nation. According to the Canadian multiculturalism act, "the Constitution of Canada recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (preamble). Section 3-I states its commitment to "preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada...". This is to be implemented by "[facilitating] the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada;" (section 5-F).

Canada's commitment to preserving a multi-cultural nation makes it a very unique and interesting environment for second language learning and socio-cultural integration. That is, according to language socialization theory, language learning is deeply connected to the society and culture of the target language. Language is learned through the process of socialization, while the process of becoming a competent member of a society is

mostly through language. However, in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual society such as Canada, the issue becomes, with which language, society and culture do immigrants socialize? Even though they participated in athletics and clubs, almost every one stated that they socialized mostly with fellow ESL students-those that shared similar experiences and language. Nevertheless, they were able to successfully achieve English proficiency at the university level.

In order to understand how they integrated into Canada and acquired English, we asked them to share their methods of studying. Reading and watching television were the two main factors in helping them acquire English and the socio-cultural values that is associated with English. Some also praised their ESL teachers for their assistance during class, whereby some cultural messages were conveyed. Participants demonstrated that language socialization took place in various forms and interacting with native speakers of English was not the only avenue. They asserted that reading books and advertisements helped them to recognize the proper use of words and linguistic terms. Watching television and listening to music also provided them with much knowledge in the daily use of English. They felt comfortable as members of Canadian society even though interaction with Canadian born friends was minimal. Subsequently, all identified themselves with hyphenated names when asked about their socio-cultural identities. They clearly demonstrated that the interaction between learners and the environment was the key to their language socialization. Moreover, they revealed that within their environment there were various other possibilities for language socialization aside from interacting only with native speakers. Most importantly, they demonstrated that in a

multi-cultural context, one could become a member of a new society while retaining strong ties with their first cultures.

Implications

This study used a qualitative approach to reveal participants' perspectives concerning the socio-cultural factors that helped or hindered their integration process into the British Columbia school system and Canadian society. Questions emerged which call for future research to explore deeper ESL students' experiences in classrooms.

This study has begun to develop a better understanding of ESL students' experiences in school and a new world. It would be of great benefit to explore further this area by replicating this research in different contexts and with different age groups. Moreover, this topic should be reexamined using longitudinal studies to document how ESL students construct the experiences of their interaction within and outside of school over time.

The data revealed the difficulties that arose because parental expectations often differed greatly from the expectations participants faced at school. Moreover, participants' home values and customs contrasted greatly from the values and customs they encountered in their social settings. More research should be conducted to understand how schools might help ESL students ease the tension between their home and school cultures. One suggestion may be that schools should educate parents about the socio-cultural environments their children participate in. Through this, parents and ESL students would be able to experience the integration process together, which in turn, may help parents to set feasible goals for their children.

Exploring ESL and mainstream students' views toward each other may also be an important study. Other studies have also suggested the problem of segregation between mainstream and ESL students (Gunderson, 2000). Ethnographic studies documenting mainstream students' interactions with ESL students would further illuminate how school might effectively foster unity and support between the two groups.

Finally, given that there are a variety of ESL programs that exist, it may be to the benefit of ESL students to conduct an ethnographic study comparing different ESL programs. This should enable schools to take steps toward uncovering and implementing the elements that constitute a favorable environment for ESL learning.

Conclusion

The ESL experiences shared by fourteen university students in this study have illuminated the process of their transition out of ESL programs. It became clear that they faced an overwhelming tension between home and school. Subsequently, their circumstances led them into a world of duality. Their world of in-between was perceived positively, that being bilingual and bicultural provided them with the option of choosing from multiple views and ideas. However, this also meant that they carried the responsibilities of both cultures. Success, therefore, was mainly defined as the ability to reconcile the two cultures- meeting the expectations from home while integrating new words, values and beliefs into their existing identities.

This study has yielded interesting and valuable data. However, findings cannot be generalized beyond its specific research context of lower mainland ESL programs in British Columbia. It is hoped that this study has made clear some of the issues

surrounding ESL students' experiences. By documenting participants' own opinions and experiences, it is hoped that this study will play a part in assisting ESL students, parents, and teachers in bridging the gap between two different, sometimes opposing, worlds.

Chapter 6

Comparison of findings

Interpretation in qualitative research can be explained as a perspectival account of a researcher's prior knowledge and experience (Palys, 1997; Peshkin, 2000). A researcher's conclusion is often shaped and dependent on his/her experiences.

Interpretation in qualitative research is essentially an act of the researcher using his/her experience to interpret the experience of the participant(s). What questions a researcher chooses to ask and how answers are understood are determined by where the researcher situates him/herself. The nature of this line of research yields a great degree of subjectivity from both researchers and participants. One of the purposes of this research was to examine how a researcher's subjectivity (more specifically, our backgrounds and interests) affected the organization, analysis and interpretation of data. To this end, two researchers (Jérémie Séror and Louis Chen) designed and conducted this study together, but analyzed the data separately, thereby, arriving at our conclusions independently.

The purpose of this collaborative design was to compare the process in which each researcher came to his interpretation of the data. The writing of this chapter began only after both researchers had independently completed their analyses and interpretations. The chapters were then exchanged for comparison. By doing so, we were able to validate and critique each other's findings and understand how much subjectivity was at play in our interpretations. This approach also kept us accountable to one another, it ensured the data were not falsely altered to mislead the reader. The focus of this chapter is on the researchers. It examines the similarities and differences between

our interpretations and discusses how this collaborative design benefited this project, as well as our understanding of successful ESL students.

Chapter 1

Interesting similarities and differences were found between our chapters. A significant difference in our chapters one lies in our statement of the problem, the background of the study, and the purpose of the study. From these differences emerged two perspectives of the same problem for the reader to consider. This chapter was particularly important because it served as the basis for the rest of our theses. By comparing our chapters, the reader will find that by considering both perspectives, one may develop a more comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Despite having been given the same chapter outline by our supervisor, we organized chapter one differently according to issues we wanted to highlight. Under the section of our study background, Jérémie's provided a thorough description of the current situation in Vancouver's school system by discussing the different problems in different ESL systems and describing social and demographic changes in Vancouver. The empirical data he presented served as a strong foundation for his thesis. I, on the other hand, made use of my personal experience as an immigrant as a guide to assist me in this study. By highlighting my own experiences, it was hoped that the reader could conceptualize the difficulties participants encountered during the journeys they embarked on in Canada. The strategic choice of telling my own experiences had the purpose of giving the reader insights into reasons behind my selection of literature and my interpretation of the data. For this reason, the researcher's personal experience was given

a valid place in this thesis. Subsequently, I placed similar information under the section "Statement of the problem", a section title that did not appear in Jérémie's thesis. This organization seemed fitting because it presented to the reader a clear understanding of the situation in the Greater Vancouver area.

Although these may be seen as superficial differences, nevertheless, it is an interesting point for consideration. That is, we clearly had different understandings of what the "Background of the study" section consisted of. It seemed naturally fitting to speak of my experiences under this section as the section title yielded the possibility of using a researcher's own experiences as part of the background for the study. Jérémie, however, painted the background by directing the reader's attention to the difficulties facing Vancouver's school system in regards to creating an education system capable of accommodating the growing number of non-English speaking students and reducing the high number of dropouts. Our organization of chapter one led us to slightly different focuses; nevertheless, we arrived at similar conclusions. It should be noted also that our differences complimented one another as the two perspectives combined to provide the reader a more holistic view of what immigrant students' experience in the current school system.

Chapter 2

Through this chapter our differences became more apparent. The influence of our personal backgrounds in our choice of literature and the way the literature shaped our theses proved to be most interesting. Both researchers carried out the literature search collaboratively. Interestingly, however, our chapters two differed greatly from each

other. Despite sharing the literature we found together and individually, we chose different literature to guide and shape our individual theses. Several factors may have contributed to this difference: first, our personal backgrounds may have affected our decision to choose the literature that we felt was most relevant for us to situate this study; second, our familiarity with different authors and researchers may have affected our choices of literature; third, despite our interests in the same problem, each of us chose the literature that best highlighted our specific interest in this broad and complex topic.

In chapter two, Jérémie provided a comprehensive literature review that covered a variety of different issues concerning minority and second language students. Most notably, his review detailed the drastic demographic changes that have taken place in North American classrooms and the persistent problems associated with this change. Jérémie criticized school systems for lacking sensitivity to the diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds that make up today's classrooms, that results in the failure to recognize various physical, psychological, linguistic, and socio-economic challenges different students bring to the classroom. Evidence points to these factors as reasons that complicate students' academic endeavors. In coping with this problem, he presented evidence from research pointing to the advantages of bilingual and multicultural education. However, as Jérémie's critique suggested, such programs may not be implemented to their full potential due to lack of funding, unprepared teachers, unfair assessment practices, and an English-only policy.

Whereas Jérémie situated his thesis within a broader range of literature, I chose a narrower focus to provide a theoretical background. The literature review was organized into three categories: socio-cultural identity, social theory in education, and language

socialization. Throughout this project I was especially interested in exploring students' perception of their identities and how and what different factors affected them.

Subsequently, I focused on studies that took an in-depth look at the effects of social, political, cultural factors at the micro level in second language learning. By micro level, my intentions were to look at the factors that were within students' immediate contexts (home, school, work). Literature relating to the integration of socio-cultural experiences and literacy were important selections for paving the way to understand how participants constructed meaning through their experiences. It was hoped that through these selections, the reader might be better able to conceptualize the reality of ESL students in the current system and sympathize with their struggles to succeed.

There was a significant difference in our choices of literature. A specific genre of literature written by Asian immigrants detailing their immigration experiences and hybrid identities occupied a major role in the shaping of my thesis (Liu, 1998; Tuan, 1998; Yep, 1998; Yuan, 2001; Zia, 2000). These selections were especially appropriate because the majority of participants were Asian immigrants. Moreover, the experiences these authors described affirmed the process of changing identities and my hybrid identity as an Asian immigrant in a western culture.

Upon reading Jérémie's chapter two, I was surprised that none of the aforementioned literature appeared in his chapter two. Instead, multiculturalism and bilingualism appeared to have been major issues that foregrounded his thesis. Perhaps, Jérémie's reason for highlighting issues of multiculturalism and bilingualism were connected to his personal background as a French-English bilingual. Having experienced

first hand bilingual education may have contributed to his support for implementing such approach in British Columbia.

A comparison of chapters one and two revealed the significant role a researcher's background plays in shaping a study. The variations seen in our chapters two were direct results of differences in our backgrounds. Jérémie's experience as a bilingual student may explain the reason behind his advocacy of bilingual programs and criticism of the current system in British Columbia. Likewise, my visible status as a minority immigrant compelled me to have a specific focus on student identities, cultural beliefs, and social realities-all of which are issues I am continuing to sift through in order to locate myself in between two cultures. Although not as comprehensive as compared to Jérémie's literature review, it provided a closer look at socio-cultural issues confronting ESL immigrants students. Thus, depending on the researcher, a study may be situated in different theoretical frameworks and presented from different perspectives. In the following sections of this chapter, I will compare our chapters four and five, in an attempt to understand how our backgrounds affected our interpretations of data. In chapter seven, we will then examine the differences together in detail.

Chapter 3

Both researchers conducted this project collaboratively, followed the same procedures, and used the same research questions. No significant differences were observed from this chapter aside from the different decisions we made regarding whether or not to include Nansen in our theses and the use of different literature to support our methodology.

Chapter 4

The comparison of our chapters four revealed some interesting similarities and differences. Prior to conducting this study, we had hypothesized that the differences in our backgrounds might lead to significantly different interpretations of the data. Upon comparing our chapters four, I concluded that our backgrounds played only minor roles in the differences of our data analysis. Rather, more similarities than differences were found in our interpretations. Both of us identified similar problems from the data and also held similar views regarding the problems identified. The similarities we shared confirmed our interpretations.

Interesting differences were nevertheless found between our chapters four, one of which pertained to participants' identities as ESL students. Nine out of 14 participants conveyed a strong sense of discomfort regarding their ESL status. The ESL label imposed on them a secondary status and implied to them feelings of inferiority. Exiting the ESL program became more than just a natural progression into mainstream classes, it was a necessary task to avoid being perceived as academically challenged and not trustworthy by other students and teachers alike (see section 4-3-1). In my chapter four, a great deal of discussion focused on this particular point as the negativity associated with the ESL label became their motivating force for success. Although Jérémie did make brief mention of participants' struggles under the label of ESL, more information could have been extracted from the data because it proved to be a significant issue that greatly effected participants' identities and success.

Participants' bicultural identity was another vital point that Jérémie made very little mention of. Questions were asked to understand the relationship between

participants' views on the acquisition of English, their success and identities. Section 4-4-1, "Identities and success", and section 4-4-2, "Living between two worlds", reported the role English played in providing them the feeling of being a Canadian, and subsequently, a bicultural identity. Participants suggested that their success was partly defined as being able to maintain a bicultural identity and possessing the knowledge of two cultural values and beliefs. It seemed that this was an important factor in their success, interestingly, Jérémie's chapter four focused very little on participants' bicultural identities despite his interest in bilingual education.

Other interesting differences were seen in our choices of participants' words. In some instances, different quotes from different participants were selected to illustrate similar points. For example, on page 108 of Jérémie's thesis and page 40 of mine, we used different parts of the same paragraph quoted from Robert, that is, Jérémie quoted the first half and I quoted the second half of the paragraph. From my draft, I stated the following:

"Some participants however, stated that some parents had utilized their sense of duty and demanded results that were beyond their call of duty as students:

'...if you think you cannot, go into four year university when you graduate from high school then, start thinking about 2 year colleges, and and community colleges, and you can always transfer, and, think of oth-think of, what other options rather than, and, and, and like thinking about just like, Harvard or ...like John Hopkins, cause some of the people that I have taught, my students, they, they are always very into that. Especially the immigrant children, because in the family they would be told repeatedly that that is a symbol of success. And that your parents are like..."I'm doing, I'm working like 18 hours a day, it's just so you can have a decent education like, can't you at least do this for me", and, and that is not a very good way of, encouraging people (LAUGHS) to do something. I mean, it would make them maybe try harder, but, if it doesn't work out, it's going to be, uh, well have uh, not, not such a positive outcome I think...I know it's not easy knowing the, the difference between, uh, being, being uh, an

overzealous monster, or, or being an encouraging parent, but, but, I mean, I guess you just have to figure it out on your own." (p. 41-42)

Jérémie however, presented the quote in the following:

"...the informants also talked of the importance of setting realistic goals and objectives in order to remain confident and positive.

'Robert: ...people here, they come, and they, they look at, what they think are the success cases. And and they, try to be, just like that. And, in, in, in the process they, often times, fall into the trap of setting up an impossible, goal. Something that is, completely unattainable for these people. People come from different circumstances and they have different abilities and, and, sometimes they just, uh try to be so much like those people, and when they cannot achieve the goal, they just become completely crushed. And, I think it's much better that you set up a realistic goal that would be suitable for you. If, if you think you cannot, go into four year university when you graduate from high school then, start thinking about 2 year colleges, and and community colleges, and you can always transfer, and, think of oth-think of, what other options rather than, and, and, and like thinking about just like, Harvard or ...like John Hopkins..." (p. 108).

Whereas Jérémie made the point that parents and students need to set realistic goals, I used this example to illustrate high academic expectations set by overzealous parents.

There was an occasion whereby the same quote was used in slightly different contexts. For example, the quote by Ani found in page 79-80 of Jérémie's thesis and page 40 of mine, was interpreted differently. From my draft:

"Moreover, participants' success was always compared with that of others without the consideration of differences in students' abilities and backgrounds. This was suggested by Ani during her ESL and university experiences:

'...my dad used to say, "you have to be like, out of ESL". Because I was here for a year I guess, and then there was, another Taiwanese came to our, to our school and, she was pretty good in English. I guess when she came, she was like level 1, and then like a few months later, they moved her to level 3, and then my dad was really mad at me because I didn't do

that, because I was moving like gradually, like step by step, so I guess my dad was really, yeah, he was, he was telling me everyday like "you have to be out of ESL"..."

In Jérémie's draft:

"We were not surprised to find that parents of some of the informants also shared a negative perception of ESL classes and a desire for their children to exit them as quickly as possible.

'Ani: ...my dad used to say, "you have to be like, out of ESL". Because I was here for a year I guess, and then there was, another Taiwanese came to our, to our school and, she was pretty good in English. I guess when she came, she was like level 1, and then like a few months later, they moved her to level 3, and then my dad was really mad at me because I didn't do that, because I was moving like gradually, like step by step, so I guess my dad was really, yeah, he was, he was telling me everyday like "you have to be out of ESL"..."

According to Jérémie, the quote conveyed ESL parents' dissatisfaction with ESL programs. I, on the hand, perceived the quote as suggesting the shamefulness that is associated with being in ESL program by participants' parents.

In addition to these interesting differences, the similarities we shared also deserve mentioning. Two researchers from different backgrounds came to recognize similar issues emerged from this data. For example, we both agreed on the major themes such as the need for schools to: foster a friendlier and culturally sensitive environment, pay attention to students' social needs, make use of ESL students' first language and cultural knowledge. The similarities we shared proved to be a positive point for both of our theses, as they strengthened the validity and reliability of our findings and interpretations. Hence, the issues identified in our chapters four may prove to be vital in understanding and helping ESL student achieve success.

Chapter 5

As previously mentioned, the literature we selected in chapter two guided the rest of our theses down slightly different paths. From our chapters five, it became clear that each of us interpreted the data with a particular state of mind (Peshkin, 2000). In this chapter, Jérémie offered a comprehensive list of reasons contributing to participants' success, addressing factors such as special conflicts they encountered, the positive influence from their prior educational experiences, their resources, and the effort they made in creating social interactions. His organization of chapter five provided the reader with a full view of the situation confronting ESL students. Also through this organization, it appeared that Jérémie applied a more objective view in his interpretations.

Differing from Jérémie, my chapter five paid close attention to issues relating to three specific areas of focus as outlined in chapter two. This approach allowed an in-depth discussion of specific issues and an exploration into reasons behind participants' responses. It could be argued that by categorizing participants' responses, it might have restricted the voices of the participants. However, it was my intention to discuss in depth the factors that participants identified as having been the most critical, while demonstrating how the forces of Confucian philosophy, language socialization, and the notion of investment were at work during their experiences. Not surprisingly, these were factors that also had major effects in my own immigration experience.

By connecting the similar findings that we observed during our individual analysis to the different literature that we selected for our literature review, the issues we identified were discussed under different contexts. An example is found in our chapters

when we both made mention of success and family. In this instance, Jérémie highlighted parental support as having been key to coping with conflicts, while also serving as inspirations for self-motivation and achieving high goals. While I agree with Jérémie's assessment regarding this issue, however, it seemed that hiding behind participants' responses were clues to their negative perceptions of parental influence. While parents were the sources of support, their influence also served as a source of tension which participants identified. Much of the stress associated with their bicultural identities came as a direct result of their parents' goals in seeing their children succeed. Indeed, the role of family was vital to participants' success. I would caution however, that research be conducted to examine the extent to which parents are helpful or distracting to ESL students' learning before we deem parents as the key to students' success. It is precisely because parents hold such an influential role, attention needs to be directed to this line of research to further understand the impact they have on their children.

Upon comparing our chapters five, I noticed Jérémie paid less attention in his analysis of interpersonal relationships within the family. It seemed clear participants' families shaped their definitions of success and identities, however, Jérémie commented very little on the degree of influence which parents had over participants.

My keen awareness of participants' socio-cultural struggles and relationships at home may have been closely connected with my personal background. As a Chinese immigrant, participants' struggles with these issues resonated with my own experiences. It became a particularly interesting point for me to explore and analyze closely the connection between family relationships and success. Although my own background may have made my interpretation narrower compared to Jérémie's, it was hoped that my

specific focus on parents' profound influence might have offered new insights into understanding the pressure many immigrant students appear to encounter.

Finally, my background may have contributed in another way. Like many first generation immigrants, including participants in this study, the ability to take on a bicultural identity and withstand the tension associated with this identity gives the individual a sense of success. Participants overcame the struggle to find a place in a new world, while fulfilling contrary expectations to their families. Such was my experience and while analyzing participants' responses, much of it was relived. Unquestionably, these were issues I interpreted as of the utmost importance to immigrant students' success.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how a researcher's background can affect the interpretation of data. Our differences in backgrounds led us to perceive the data from slightly different angles, which subsequently, provided some different interpretations. I speculate if this set of data was presented to a third researcher, different interpretations might occur. We encourage more research to be conducted using this approach to ensure a greater degree of validity whereby researchers can compare and reconcile their differences.

The similarities found in this comparison also brought forth some interesting points for discussion and confirmed many of our interpretations of the data. What proved to be most interesting was how two researchers from two different backgrounds arrived at a similar destination by taking two distinctively different paths. On the way, we each

focused on slightly different aspects of the same problem. But together, our theses compliment one another.

To further strengthen our conclusions, we will co-write the next chapter (a chapter which will appear in both of our theses) whereby we discuss how we arrived at our conclusions through our similarities and despite our differences.

Epilogue

This epilogue is a record of a discussion between Jérémie Séror and Louis Chen pertaining to the questions raised in each of their theses. This dialogue took place after having had the opportunity to exchange our theses and taking some time to reflect and respond to each other's interpretations of the data we had collected together.

This epilogue is but a sample of the kind of continuous dialogue of ideas and questions that occurred throughout this research process. As was the case in many other conversations, through the dialogue that followed our final exchange of our theses, with the inclusion of our chapters six: a response to our work, our ideas were scrutinized, examined and possibly focused and polished one more time. It is in this sense a great example of what we perceive to be a great advantage of the type of collaborative research that we engaged in.

In this study, two researchers examined the same data from two perspectives. Having spent long hours trying to be critical in the development of our own ideas, it was interesting to apply the same standards to the "other's" view of things. This dialogue records this attempt to raise and discuss some of the most interesting and important points made in our chapters six. We admit here, that the ultimate purpose of this discussion was never to simply resolve our differences by arriving at a final cure-all solution or deciding on the "right" or "correct" interpretation. Rather, our discussion was centred on learning from each other by attempting to understand each other's views and reasons behind our interpretation of the data. Moreover, we were perhaps not surprised to see that as an added benefit, new ideas or interpretations could emerge through this dialogue.

The discussion presented below is in the form of a transcript. This transcript was created with the use of the Microsoft Network Messenger software. This technology, which allows two computer users to chat and talk instantaneously through the Internet, was chosen as it enabled us to have a face-to-face conversation while simultaneously transcribing and recording our exchange of ideas.

And so, we now invite the reader to join us in one last discussion.

Jérémie says:

Hi Louis

Louis says:

Hi Jérémie

Jérémie says:

So, what did you think of the review chapters?

Louis says:

It certainly made me question my own findings

Jérémie says:

Yes, me too. It is a great reminder of the different ways in which this data can be approached or, in better words interpreted. I liked the process. It kept us on our toes I think.

Louis says:

Yep, I think I mentioned in my chapter that this approach kept us accountable to each other.

Jérémie says:

Yes... and accountable to ourselves too. The advantage is both for us as researchers and for the readers too.

Louis says:

Absolutely! I am glad our readers can be assured that the data has undergone analysis in great depth.

Jérémie says:

Yes. The ultimate collaborative research project would have the data accessible to anyone, with the possibility for anyone to respond and add to the research in some way. Perhaps, we will see this one day in the future. But, on the other hand perhaps not. One thing that needs to be said about this research procedure, and this type of review, is that it necessitates a

strong relationship. It requires trust, respect and good communication. I think we are lucky to have that.

Louis says:

I certainly agree! In addition to that, this project has also taught me a lesson in humility--being open to other possibilities. It's hard to believe, but, I am not always right.

Jérémie says:

Me too...Nicely said. I like that...you are right: humility is important in this. You have to remain open, and ready to question everything you've said. It's like the zen saying: "You can't add tea (learn something new) if your cup is already full".

Louis says:

So now, one question begs to be asked...is this approach for everyone? There is also the possibility that this approach may also destroy a friendship.

Jérémie says:

Hmmm....Good question. It comes back to what you said. I think it could destroy a friendship (or be much harder) for someone who is not as open to questioning, or trying to see things from (an)other point of view. You have to be a good listener. You also have to be able to explain yourself clearly. The absence of these qualities would make it very difficult. You have to be humble. On the other hand...we can't be push-overs either. The advantage of debating things is that it can lead people to potentially coming to a better conclusion (that's if you believe there is a truth out there to discover).

Louis says:

Yes! The issues and questions we are about to discuss have no answers I think. Isn't this one of the main points we are trying to demonstrate? That no data offers a set of answers; it only generates more questions to be explored.

Jérémie says:

Yes, though I don't want to be too relativistic. There are some answers I think, but perhaps we both discovered that they would not be discovered through one thesis alone. More people will have to look at other students and see what they find. There are some definite implications to our research though. They are general but wouldn't they qualify as answers to our original questions...or...at least beginning of answers?

Louis says:

Yes. But my point was that it does not stop here. It is just the beginning.

Jérémie says:

YES!!! I agree. That was for me the biggest thing I learned from this. I was so naive. I really thought it would be more definite, that I could make the whole journey in one research. I discovered I had only taken a small step.

Louis says:

At this point I would like to remind ourselves, our readers, and the research community that the process was equally important to what we've found. Having two people reading and reporting what they've read is very different from having two people conducting the research together.

Jérémie says:

Yes. I would definitely recommend this process to others.

How about we try and list some of the most important things we think we discovered through this research? We could then discuss them, and see/clarify our interpretations...

In other words, what did we learn from this? For example, I think our theses would support that ESL students need the extra-help that has been requested by schools (this in spite of the recent budget cuts by governments for the education of special-needs students like "ESL" students).

Louis says:

Oh certainly! Simply put, most of our participants suggested the need for more individual attention. We need more teachers, especially teachers that are aware of the difficulties ESL students face.

Jérémie says:

Yes, and more people need to be made aware of these difficulties. Ignoring these difficulties or refusing to acknowledge them, in order to treat all students equally, is in my mind a devious form of discrimination. The truth is that they are not equal. All parties involved (not only the students) need extra help to help foster academic and social achievement.

That's one thing I noticed with the students. I really felt that their discourse reflected the individualism (and consequent isolation) that is fostered in North American schools. That is tragic, I believe, in the case of ILMS especially. I don't think it is simply a matter of "If "you" want to do it, "you" can do it!" What do you think?

Louis says:

Well, from our data, it appeared that the participants believed that if they worked hard, they would succeed in all of their endeavors. However, almost all of them expressed how difficult it was for them to be taken seriously, especially by their Canadian counterparts. So the question is a very complex one.

Jérémie says:

Yes. It is complex because the belief system seems contradictory to the actual reality of what it takes to succeed. It is part of what I call the two big lies promoted in this society: a) that one man or woman can individually make a difference and b) that things can be changed. The message is out

there that these things are true. I however question whether they really reflect reality. In other words, would more students succeed, if we promoted explicitly the message that it is not effort, but also their social networks, which will allow them to succeed?

Louis says:

Although I should mention that it seemed to me they were speaking strictly in their immediate contexts. That is, they were confident in their close social networks but, to rise above the dominant culture didn't seem to be possible.

Jérémie says:

Yes...that is definitely, something that seemed to be there, more implied than direct though, the feeling that they did not completely feel like they could join "the dominant culture".

But, I want to say, that the word "dominant culture" bothers me. It seems to set up a relationship based on conflict. Do we really want to frame this discussion in this way? Is it really a fight? Perhaps it is? But would it make a difference if we changed the discourse and saw it more as a "joining the majority culture".

Louis says:

To answer this, we need to first ask: according to participants, what is "majority culture"?

Jérémie says:

Yes...that it is slippery too. I guess it would be whatever they felt defined the community that they would qualify as the community of everyone else in this society: the society of the insiders.

Louis says:

In that case, it would be people of the same ethnic background?

Jérémie says:

I don't think so...or at least not to such an extent in some cases in Canada... I know some people who feel part of Canada (though they are second generation Canadians), and this despite the fact that their ethnic backgrounds are different.

Also, we could ask...does anyone ever feel like they can join or rise above the majority/dominant culture? Even language majority students?

Louis says:

In response to the comment about people who feel part of Canada despite the fact that their ethnic backgrounds are different, didn't it seem to you that most of our participants interacted very little with people outside of their ethnic backgrounds?

Jérémie says:

Yes...and no... some of them did interact with people from outside their ethnic backgrounds, or groups where ethnicity was not the defining criteria for membership. For example, I think we saw examples of students who

had formed memberships in groups where religion and similar interests were the defining criteria. In these cases, it seemed to me that their interactions were quite varied. In other words, I think interactions with other students outside ethnic backgrounds were more difficult to establish, but that they were established nonetheless.

Louis says:

In regards to rising above the dominant culture...majority students may not feel that way but they are aware that they are in a culture that they feel comfortable about calling it their own, whereas immigrant students have the tendency to perceive the dominant culture as belonging to someone else.

Jérémie says:

That's true...It has to do with ownership....or membership. Unless you are born in a community, whenever you enter a community, there will always be that feeling. As applies to the case of ILMS and membership/ownership is something that is negotiated (here I go again stressing the role of interactions) when you enter a community with people inside of it. I think the interesting question that we could ask, is whether people in the majority language culture are really willing to let these guys in/give them membership?

Louis says:

Yes, they were established however, were close friendships established? Surely they interacted with people outside of their ethnic backgrounds everyday (bus rides, shopping) but I am not sure these interactions progressed beyond the level of acquaintances.

Jérémie says:

Hmmm....How about the close friends that Mari reported. Or that Beth and Naomi reported. Or the fact that Kenneth reported that he mostly socialized with non-Koreans. There are also the deep relationships they established with teachers and tutors. These did not seem to be superficial.

Louis says:

Going back to your original question though, were they willing? Multiculturalism has taken a new definition to mean "non-white".

Jérémie says:

Yes...The sad truth is that if majority language students are not willing, there is not much we can do to improve the situation. Nothing the immigrant language minority students will do will help much. Or in other words, perhaps we should not concentrate on minority language students, but rather, on the majority language players in this relationship, to try and help them understand the benefits of "being willing".

Louis says:

But I would argue that the majority of the students in the study commented on the close friendships they have are with those from their own ethnic backgrounds.

Jérémie says:

YES! But I think that if there were exceptions, and that it is exactly these exceptions that helped them the most. Plus...what about the friendships that were reported with second generation Chinese....for example. Where do we put these friendships? Do they fall in the same ethnic background category? Is it the ethnicity that matters, or the fact that they share the same experience as language learners and immigrants? It would be interesting to do a little quantitative study of how many friends belonging in various categories immigrant language students have.

Louis says:

I agree. This goes back to your previous comment that if the majority are willing to let them "in", we would see many more inter-cultural friendships established. I think it is mostly the experience that brings them together. However, we tend to be drawn to those who share the same experiences and speak the same language as we do.

Jérémie says:

I guess, you can't simply take membership. Nor can you simply give it. It has to be built willingly by both parties involved: those entering the community and those exiting it. Yes...that is the tendency to be drawn to those who share the same experiences...but what do we say about it? What should we do as educators if we accept this? Should we fight it? Should we encourage it? I think we should do a little of both, and I think this was supported by the advice given by the students: i.e. you need friends who are native speakers of your languages/cultures, but also friends from other categories.

Louis says:

Of course we need friends from other categories too, but as you said, we cannot impose a friendship on anyone. I am just stating a natural tendency and hoping that teachers and researchers take that into consideration.

....BREAK....

Jérémie says:

During this lunch, I was struck with the idea that in the end, perhaps it does not really matter so much what the intentions of the majority community and those of the students trying to enter it really are. What really matters are how these intentions are perceived. One of the things I learned in this thesis is that sometimes, the reality and the perception can be very different. Consequently, I think one of the implications of these theses was that what we need to do is focus more on how things are being perceived, rather than simply trying to describe how things are in schools.

Louis says:

I couldn't agree with you more. After all, that's why we conducted this research- to understand through the experiences of participants and their own words.

Jérémie says:

That's right! So if I were to ask you what you felt their perception of the situation were, what would you answer?

Louis says:

I think they still perceive themselves as outsiders looking in, however, they seemed to have become comfortable in their own social circle so perhaps there were less urgency to be in the "mainstream", rather, they have come to build their own "mainstream". A sub-culture I call the "Chinatown phenomenon". It is quite simple, people on the outside create their own society and culture, together, find ways to exist without conforming to what the mainstream imposes on them.

Jérémie says:

That makes it sound like the mainstream has no influence on them...Is this what you mean?

Louis says:

Oh no, it is the mainstream that leads them to such mentality.

Jérémie says:

Hmm....Okay. So what happens to those students who are completely alone (the Vietnamese and the Ukranians) the ESL students who may not have the resources (or the people) around them to make a sub-community? Is this why they fail more than some of the other ethnic groups? Or is it possible for one individual to form a sub-community of one.

Louis says:

I think you have just hinted at the reason why I think many of these students you've just mentioned tend to be less successful. In some ways I think this point you've just made is one distinguishing factor between our participants and the Vietnamese and the Ukrainians, those that didn't respond to our call for participants.

Jérémie says:

Hmm...I think I understand, so you're saying they didn't answer our call for participants because...???

Louis says:

Because many of them do not make it to post-secondary institution, as Dr. Gunderson's research (2000, 2001) has addressed.

Jérémie says:

Ok...but I wonder, did all of our students feel like they were on "the outside looking in"? Did Celeste see herself as an outsider? She seemed pretty confident! And perhaps suggested that we are all outside looking in (immigrants and non-immigrants alike). I think that if we take this position then it empowers immigrants, because then the onus is no longer on membership (or rather it changes the rules of membership, and who can assign it, making the community easier to enter). I guess that's one way that native English speakers empower themselves...they assume they are part of the community. They don't question it as you said.

Louis says:

Not Celeste, but it seemed to me that the majority spoke as outsiders during the interview. Of course the non-immigrants do not question, look at the title we give them, "THE MAINSTREAM", "THE NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH".

Jérémie says:

Exactly you are right....that's why, I tried to stay away from these words in the theses and even now... I completely agree with Gee and Delpit. The very words we choose, the discourse we use, even in simply discussing these issues in an informal way like this, really has an impact on the shape of the arguments.

I wonder then, if it is true that they are outsiders, can we change it? What made some of the students like Celeste in our study, feel like insiders? What can we learn from that?

Personally, I really think it has to do with replacing the formula/discourse from the focus on ethnicity (where you are from?) to actual participation (what you are doing) as the defining criteria for membership. Doing so, disempowers majority community members, but allows more people to join the community without the insecurity and shame demonstrated by the students. I guess I am stressing this point because I feel that if the ILMS end up feeling as outsiders, that this is a failure on the part of the schools.

Louis says:

Well...if we lose focus on ethnicity, it may be perceived as down-playing ESL students' first culture. I do agree that we need to recognize what they are doing, however, what they are doing is very much connected with where they are from and where they position themselves, and hence, how things are perceived...The reality is...they need to learn about The Simpsons, Starwars, and Hemmingway in order to get "in", otherwise, they'll continue to live in Chinatown where there's no need to know these things to be a part of a community.

Jérémie says:

Yes....I don't think we should lose focus of their first culture but I wonder if it is too difficult to talk about the first culture: what does that mean? How long does it have an impact on them? I don't want to play it down. I believe it has a great impact on how they approach/perceive things, but I also don't want to say that it is the most important thing...because I am not sure if it...really exists for immigrants. I think back to what I said in chapter 6 about immigrants not really being "Chinese" anymore as soon as they immigrate. They become "Chinese-immigrants"...Is that their first culture? Or is it something else? I think it is something else...a composite of the dominant and original culture.

Louis says:

I'm thinking that I am agreeing with you. The one point, however, we cannot overlook is that their first culture is a big part of their identity, it is the only culture they know prior to

immigration. Of course their identities undergo changes as soon as they arrive, however, the first culture does not disappear, it is their only reference for judgement and comparison.

Jérémie says:

Only reference????

Louis says:

Their only cultural reference, which include beliefs and values.

Jérémie says:

Ok...So their first culture is their starting block. Yes. It affects how they see schools and people (as suggested by Ogbu)...at first. Don't you think that the first culture might disappear with time....Could it disappear as a new culture is created? I think part of the problems and frustration faced by some ILMS is the conflict that occurs when one tries to hang on tightly to something which is in actuality not a solid, but rather a liquid, and which has to change in a new environment (I see that as the problem of some parents who try to force their children to do things in the same way as back home...)

Louis says:

First culture never disappears, it's our ethnicity, our essence, our color. It's also our history and our foundation; it changes as we add to it but it can never disappear. Now, we are talking about first and second generation immigrants here only right?

Jérémie says:

I think it does disappear (or at least it changes....gets diluted)...like adding a new liquid to a soup. The original liquid disappears to make room for the new one. The ingredients do not stay separated... And yes, I think we are talking about first and second generation immigrants, but I think this could apply to any move from one community to another, where two cultures meet.

Louis says:

Well...referring back to what your father said, in his case, his is a French immigrant, that pronoun should never disappear or become an adjective. It will remain a pronoun for your father always. So your father will always be French! All of his memories and experiences have elements of French culture in them. The degree to which one retained those things is up to their own choice. However, he will always be French.

Jérémie says:

Agreed, but he would argue that it would be hard to explain his actions by referring to this French identity, since it is much diluted from "the standard"....or since you need to know much more than the French culture to understand the memories and experiences he has (that's if a standard French exists anyways...).

You know, I as we speak, I really think our interpretations were indeed connected to our own backgrounds, as suggested in your thesis. My

grandfather immigrated to France from Tunisia, and my father immigrated from France to Canada. I myself am contemplating spending my life in another country: Japan. So perhaps this is why I feel so strongly that the "Pronoun" cannot capture everything. Personally, in my family, we're all mixed up now. I don't even know what my pronoun really is. Does this mean I am on the outside looking in. This is why I think perhaps this happens to everyone

Louis says:

Let me respond to that by giving you this scenario...if you had never met me and we were introduced today, would your first thought be "Louis is Canadian"? I believe every time I am introduced to a stranger, I am perceived as an Asian. As a matter of fact, every time after I introduce myself as a Canadian, people never fail to ask, "so where are you *really* from"? So, whether I like it or not I am always an Asian. If the stranger really cares, he/she may ask me specifically "from what country?" So this answers the question you posed in Chapter 6 as to why I chose to use "Asian". Although I will admit I may have used the word too loosely and for that I apologize to you and my readers.

Jérémie says:

Same thing happens to me...(because of my family name...and even my looks believe it or not)...So, yes...that label of a foreigner is imposed on you(us) by others (in this case, members of the majority community). But does that make the label correct? Are you Asian because they say you're Asian. I feel strongly that I am Canadian, even though some might say that I am not, but I know that it is easier for me to say perhaps as I was born here. That gives me a special kind of confidence (by the way...you don't need to apologize for the use of the term "Asian". It is very popular and is used a lot).

Louis says:

I very much agree that a simple term such as "Asian", "French", or "Chinese" does not even begin to allow us to understand an individual. However, for those that just arrive in a new country, that term "Asian" may also be a safety net because it allows them a place to belong to. It fills an individual's heritage deficit. It's a deficit that results in most immigrants' lives because they lose touch with their first culture by being in a new culture where most things look foreign to them. Keep in mind, that for people like myself, I am in between cultures, or rather, I possess two cultures. I am not just Chinese or Canadian. My identity is broader, and "Asian" yields that possibility to be both.

Jérémie says:

Oh...that is interesting. I never considered the Asian label as containing more than one possible identity!!! Yes... I guess, that you are identifying the benefits of these larger labels. They can either include (when used by the immigrants) or exclude (when used by the majority speakers), but in the end, I am cautious about both those uses. They might make them feel safer, but it might also create a false image of who they really are. Is it fair to tell a kid raised in Canada that they are Chinese? Are they really? Doesn't that confuse the heck out of them? I think we should tell kids they

are hybrids, that they don't have to be one or the other...because it is impossible division.

Louis says:

Not only is it an impossible division, they need to understand the benefits of a bi-cultural identity as our participants so eloquently expressed in the interview.

Jérémie says:

As you know, I've actually had to put a lot of thought into this, as I prepare the birth of my son. I think you should tell kids that if people tell them that they are a little bit of that and the other, and that this makes them different from other people who think they are made up of only one thing, that these people are wrong. Everyone is made up of a little of that and the other. Second, I think we need to tell them that it IS a good thing to free ourselves from monocultural labels. As you said, this is something that the participants in this study reported well. Multi-culturality in the real sense of the word IS an empowering force.

Louis says:

A note to our readers: by now we hope you've come to see just how complex and confusing an ESL immigrant student's life can be. The more we dialogue, the more I am confused myself. Who am I? and who do I need to be in order to succeed? Who are my friends? and how do I become friends with those who have no ideas what we're talking about here?!

Jérémie says:

I agree strongly. The education of ILMS students or more generally of language minority students is not something that can be simplified. And this is why this kind of dialogue is important. Perhaps the best way to understand something complicated is to look at it from many sides, and perspectives. No one can see the whole thing, but we can put our sides together to try and paint a clearer picture.

Louis says:

On that note, I'd like to say that this dialogue has been a tremendous help in clarifying some points I had about your chapter 6. Moreover, this dialogue has forced me to think deeper about my interpretations. I've learned to be more careful in my interpretation and my choice of words. I am glad to have you pointing out some questionable areas of my thesis.

Jérémie says:

The same applies with me. I leave with a stronger understanding of the impact that the labels we have assigned to us have, whether they truly apply or not, and a renewed interest in where these come from and the role they must play for ILMS. Most importantly, I leave with the great feeling that I have explored and seen something new. Thank you Louis.

Louis says:

What remains to be said is that we could do this all day. These are complex issues made more complex by our different backgrounds and perspectives. We may not have come to a final conclusion and a cure-all answer, but that was never the purpose for this dialogue. What this dialogue has done is showing me more issues I still have yet to discovered. Thanks Jérémie! for asking all the tough questions.

Jérémie says:

Thank YOU for the talk...It is my sincere wish that it might be followed by many more in the future as we continue our journeys of exploration.

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Procedures: Most of the items are fill-in the blanks. Please print your answers clearly. Please place the completed form in the attached envelope and return the questionnaire to us when finished.

Time: We have designed the form so that it is expected to take you between 5 to 10 minutes to fill out.

Confidentiality: The only persons authorized to access the data will be the principal investigator, and the co-investigators of this research project. The participants' names or the names of their schools, teachers or friends will not be used in the co-investigators' M.A. thesis or in any other reports. All data will be protected so that no student can be identified as a participant in this research. All written questionnaires and audiotapes of the interviews and review sessions will be kept in a locked and secure environment and will be destroyed after a period of five years.

Refusals: There will be no penalty for non-participation in this research. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Inquires: We will be pleased to answer any of your questions regarding this information form or about this project. Please do not hesitate to contact us by person, phone, or e-mail.

Consent: It is assumed that by completing this form you are giving consent for this information to be used as data for this project.

Information Form

Name:

Date:

Faculty/Department:

Program:

Year of program: _____

Number of years as a UBC
student: _____

Country of origin: _____

Age of arrival in
Canada: _____

Schools attended in Canada:

Date/year of entrance in an ESL program: _____

Date/year of exiting an ESL program: _____

Languages you speak:

L1: _____

L2: _____

L3: _____

Other: _____

In which language are you most proficient?

1) Speaking: _____

2) Reading: _____

3) Writing: _____

Procedures: The questionnaire consists of 16 questions. Most of the questions are open ended, which means that you can comment on these questions as much as you want. If you need more space for your answer, please use a separate sheet to do so. Once finished, please, place the completed questionnaire in the attached envelope and return the form to us.

Time: We have designed the questionnaire so that it is expected to take you between 40 and 60 minutes to fill it out.

Refusals: You have the right to participate in this study at any time: it is not a problem if you do not wish to return the completed questionnaire. There will be no penalty for non-participation or for not returning the completed questionnaire.

Inquiries: We will be pleased to answer any questions you may have about this questionnaire or about this project at any time. Please, do not hesitate to contact us either in person, or by phone, or e-mail.

Consent: If you complete this questionnaire and return it to us, it will be assumed that you voluntarily gave consent to use your questionnaire as data for this project.

QUESTIONNAIRE

LEARNING FROM EXAMPLE: EXPLORING ESL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS HAVING INFLUENCED THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

(RE)CONSTRUCTING AND (RE)NEGOTIATING IDENTITY: EXPLORING ESL STUDENTS' INTEGRATING AND SOCIALIZATION PROCESS INTO CANADA

Name: _____

1. Please tell us about your life before coming to Canada.
2. Tell us what happened when you arrived in Canada.
3. What was it like to be an ESL student in the Greater Vancouver area.
4. Tell us about how you studied when you were an ESL student.

5. Tell us about how you study now. Has anything changed?

6. What were your goals when you were an ESL student and how did you go about achieving them?

7. How would you rate your English language skills?

8. Some would say that as a former ESL student, who is now attending university, you have been quite successful. What do you think of this?

9. How has your own personal background influenced your success as a student?

10. Where do you feel most comfortable socializing?

11. With whom do you feel most comfortable socializing?

12. Which language do you feel most comfortable socializing in?

13. In terms of your values and lifestyle, what do you view yourself as? Ex. Canadian, Chinese, Chinese-Canadian, Canadian-Chinese. Why?

14. Has English helped you to become a Canadian? How/Why not?

15. What advice would you give to other ESL students now in the same situation as you once were and who would also like one day to be able to attend university in Canada?

16. What advice would you give to instructors who work with ESL students?

Appendix E

Sample Interview Questions

| Interview prompt items | |
|---|--|
| <p data-bbox="232 401 584 457">(1) <u>Please tell us about your life before coming to Canada?:</u></p> <ul data-bbox="232 464 629 737" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="232 464 629 520">• What languages could you speak? read? write?<li data-bbox="232 527 629 554">• Why did you come to Canada?<li data-bbox="232 560 629 646">• How did you feel about coming to Canada? (Excited, nervous, happy etc...)<li data-bbox="232 653 629 737">• What kind of education did you receive prior to coming to Canada? <p data-bbox="232 835 629 892">(2) <u>Tell us what happened when you arrived in Canada?</u></p> <ul data-bbox="232 898 629 1077" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="232 898 629 955">• How long did you wait before going to school in Canada?<li data-bbox="232 961 629 1018">• How did your parents choose your school?<li data-bbox="232 1024 629 1077">• What were your initial reactions to your school? <p data-bbox="232 1144 596 1201">(3) <u>What was it like to be an ESL student in the Vancouver area?</u></p> <ul data-bbox="232 1207 629 1480" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="232 1207 629 1264">• What did you think of the experience? Why?<li data-bbox="232 1270 629 1390">• Did you have to overcome any difficulties? How did you cope with them? How did you feel about that?<li data-bbox="232 1396 629 1480">• What were some of the advantages/disadvantages of the ESL program? <p data-bbox="232 1612 596 1669">(4) <u>Tell us about how you studied when you were an ESL student?</u></p> <ul data-bbox="232 1675 629 1885" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="232 1675 629 1732">• What strategies did you use to learn English?<li data-bbox="232 1738 629 1795">• How much time did you spend doing homework?<li data-bbox="232 1801 629 1885">• Did you have any extra help (tutors, native friends, extra classes)? | |

(5) Tell us about how you study now.

Has anything changed?

- How do you prefer to study for your school subjects? Why?
1. Alone 2. In pairs 3. In groups

-How do you prefer to study for English?

- 1. Alone 2. In pairs 3. In groups

(6) What were your goals when you were an ESL student and how did you go about achieving them?

- Was going to university one of your goals?
- Was becoming an active member of Canadian society one of your goals?
- Do you feel that you have achieved all/any of these goals?
- What goals remain?

(7) How would you rate your English language skills? 1= weak; 5= fluent.

Reading: 1 2 3 4 5 Writing: 1
2 3 4 5 Listening: 1 2 3 4 5
Speaking: 1 2 3 4 5

(8) Some would say that as an ex-ESL student who is now attending university, you have been quite successful. What do you think of this?

- Would you consider yourself a successful student? Why or why not?
- How would you define a successful student?

(9) How has your own personal background influenced your success as a student?

- Do you feel that your mother tongue helped or hindered you as an ESL student?
- Do you feel that there were any parts of your own personal culture which have helped or hindered you?

(10) Where do you feel most comfortable socializing?

- At UBC? Where?
- Outside of UBC? Where?

(11) With whom do you feel most comfortable socializing?

- Do you find yourself socializing with members of your own linguistic background?
Yes or no? Why?

(12) Which language do you feel most comfortable socializing in?

- When you are angry or upset, which language do you use to express yourself?
- Which language do you think best suit your personality?

(13) In terms of your values and lifestyle, do you view yourself as: . Why?

For example: Chinese, Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, Canadian-Chinese

(14) Has English helped you to become a Canadian? How/Why not?

- When you speak English, do you feel like a Canadian?
- When you speak English, does it remind you that English is not your first language?

(15) What advice would you give to other ESL students now in the same situation as you once were and who would also like one day to be able to attend university in Canada?

- Is there anything you did when you were in school that you would really recommend to someone else?
- Is there anything you did which you would not recommend to someone else?

(16) What advice would you give to instructors who work with ESL students?

- Was there anything that an instructor ever did which you felt made a big difference in helping you succeed and integrate as a student/Canadian?
- Was there anything that an instructor ever did that you felt was particularly destructive or negative?
- Was there anything that you wish instructors had done which was not done?

(17) And finally, what about parents? What advice would you give them?