

CRITICAL MOMENTS: EXPLORING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY
IN AN ADULT ESL CLASSROOM

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

June 6, 2024

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Abstract

This study explores, through the lens of a teacher-researcher's experiences and perspectives, the challenges and potentials of implementing critical pedagogical approaches in a community-based adult English as a Second Language (ESL) program with a focus on language learners with low proficiency in English. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the limitations and possibilities of developing and carrying out a critical pedagogical approach to ESL teaching in a government-funded community-based course. It further delves into how program policies, teacher resources, and classroom dynamics, viewed within the framework of critical pedagogy, are reflected upon by the teacher-researcher.

Using an action-oriented case study methodology that embodies elements of critical action research, participatory action research, and practitioner inquiry, the teacher-researcher engaged in implementing critical pedagogy within the classroom of 16 student participants, set within an urban community adult ESL Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. The teacher-researcher assumed the role of decision-maker and facilitator of the research, with teaching approaches adopting problem-posing. Student participants were actively involved in determining the content and direction of course content.

Data from field notes were collected and analyzed. These included a demographic survey, and documents including the Attendance Policy and attendance records, classroom resources such as texts and teacher guides, questionnaires to determine student needs and interests, researcher-developed materials, and classroom memorabilia. The result of the analysis was the identification of three themes revolving around barriers, potentials and critical possibilities for the implementation of critical pedagogy in the ESL classroom. One of the significant findings of this research study is a lack of critical pedagogical support in adult ESL classrooms.

The conclusions from this research study stem from the teacher-researcher's belief about ways in which ESL teachers can accomplish critical changes at the grassroots level, specifically within the classroom. This conclusion is followed up with idealizations ('Pedagogies of Hope') of how stakeholders involved in adult ESL programs can effect change. Within this framework, key factors influencing the implementation of critical pedagogical changes include developing appropriate program policies, training in critical pedagogy, creating suitable curricula and content, and fostering critical mindsets.

Acknowledgements & Dedication

This work of art could not have materialized without the support of so many people who have transitioned into my life. These acknowledgements encapsulate the spirits of those who have guided me throughout this long and arduous journey.

My journey began with Dr. Peter Avery, who took a chance on me when he accepted me into the TESOL program at York University many years ago. Then, there was Dr. Nick Elson, who had an unbelievable amount of hope, compassion, and encouragement to push me to be the best version of myself. His memory remains a constant source of inspiration. My gratitude does not end there! Dr. Brian Morgan, my first supervisor, provided me with a wealth of knowledge of the field and I am forever thankful that he assumed the role as my mentor before his retirement. I also want to acknowledge my committee, led by my supervisor, Dr. Antonella Valeo, and my committee member, Dr. Geoff Lawrence, for their commitment and support that lead me down the path of reflective teaching. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Philipp Angermeyer for his guidance and leadership as defense chair. Last but not least, the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics (DLLL) cannot be what it is without the amazing Rose, who is a gift to the department and a cheerleader for every student who walks into her office. She is the oil that keeps the machine going! Rose- thank you for taking me as far as I could!

I am hopeful that my external examiners have captured the passion invested in my thesis, and I want to acknowledge the time they spent contributing to my life's work. Thank you, Dr. Connie Mayer, for sharing some space and citational wisdom with me. I extend my sincerest appreciation to Dr. Antoinette Gagné, whom I have observed skillfully leading her academic tribes with dedication and expertise.

I hate writing! I love teaching! Thankfully, I have had so many groups of peers to help me get to the finish line. These kindred souls took time from their busy lives to support me. I had my initial cohort, my writing group at York (the candle is still burning folks!), and other fantastic writing groups (thank you Mary-Ann!). I am also thankful to Alyssa, my ‘writing therapist’ - I hope life is going well girl!

I want to thank the staff and students at work who supported me in this research. They did it without hesitation. More specifically, I want to express sincere appreciation to the 16 student participants who took a chance on me and showed bravery and courage throughout this endeavour. I learned so much. Thank you!

I am indebted to the sacrifices this work has had on my family. This journey in its entirety is dedicated to them. Nevertheless, they believed in me and took care of each other and me during the late nights and stressful deadlines. I love you guys! Thank-you Kevin. Thank you, Sarah, Tamara, Michaela, Alivia, Maya, and Vanessa. **Girls- I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. I AM SORRY FOR EVERYTHING!**

I also want to acknowledge that an undertaking like this really impacts one’s mental, emotional, and physical health. It did for me anyway. I want to acknowledge this and urge anyone who goes down this path to speak up about this! And get help! I would like to extend special thanks to Dr. Garces for their unwavering support and dedication to my health throughout this journey. Not all heroes wear capes!

Over the past decade or so, I told myself a thousand times I would not be able to do this. However, I told myself a thousand and one times I could. And here we are...

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Notes on Terminology

The people I speak of throughout this thesis can be captured in many ways and the labels I have assigned them in my writing will no doubt impact the reader. Althusser's (2001) theory on interpellation was considered in this process whereby calling someone *something* represents a pre-meditated belief of that person. With regard to this research, I was mindful of the power dynamics at play with the terms utilized in my writing and the limitations current English words have on representing people.

The assumptions attached to these labels is not the focus of this research (although deserve research and exploration), but I invite readers to be mindful of their own ideologies on the terms I have used throughout this thesis. The lexicons adopted throughout the chapters recognize the established subjective ideals these terms bring, and I would like to clarify some of the terms I have used and create space to recognize the inequitable representations they have. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that language constricts what we want to say and also, for the ease of comprehension and understanding, adopting current terms are necessary. As English evolves to include vocabulary that fosters more equitable representations, the terms outlined in this section describe my intentions.

Doing Critical Pedagogy

Pedagogies are typically approached as a method or practice in teaching. However, I want to reject the idea that the pedagogy I researched in this study (critical pedagogy, to be discussed later) assumes a standard method of teaching. It is not a static *practice* or *method*. Rather, I adapt Canagarajah's (2005) linguistic shift to better understand how critical pedagogy is envisioned by applying it with the verb 'do'. Within this framework, *doing* critical pedagogy acts as an attitude toward teaching and learning, and as a result, it can be implemented many

ways. The strategies I used to *do* critical pedagogy in this research study will be discussed throughout this paper.

English as a Second Language

Although there are many acronyms in education to describe someone who is learning English, I have chosen to use ESL (English as a Second Language) in this thesis to capture student participants' identities as English language learners. Discussions on community-based language programming often retain this ESL designation because of its general acceptance in the field, and because of how it provides an accepted distinction between other types of language learner designations such as those who learn English for academic or professional purposes.

L1

This thesis uses the term L1 (first language) to refer to what is commonly known as 'mother tongue', or the language which an individual grew up with at home.

Teacher

While I was in my teacher training course, my instructor (as titled in the program) presented the term, 'reflective practitioner' to represent the term 'teacher.' Although my instructor didn't explicitly define this term, it originates from Schön (1992), who argues that engaging in reflective teaching practices enables instructors to learn from and adapt their teaching methods. The representation of this term implies practice in the field suggested in critical teaching, but as I write this thesis almost 20 years later, I have not seen this term utilized elsewhere. In our LINC program, we are regarded as 'instructor,' yet students consistently address me as 'teacher.' Ideally, I would prefer to use a term such as 'critical colleague' to capture how I want to be represented in the class, but I am limited to the established terms familiar to the people involved in the field. With this in mind, terms to represent what I do (and

others like me) generally reflect the content of what I am discussing, so different terms may be used. For example, when discussion about resources and programming transpire, the term ‘instructor’ is applied because resources tend to use that term. However, when possible, I have chosen to identify most with the term ‘teacher’ because students use that term, and this thesis aims to prioritize students’ perceptions first and foremost.

Student

When I first began writing this thesis, I had chosen to use the term ‘client’ to represent student participants. ‘Client’ is the term used in LINC programs and their corresponding documentation. For me, this term better captures how I want students to be represented because it shifts the power dynamics from teacher-student to a worker-client.

LINC teaching resources and many academic texts use the word ‘learner’ to represent clients/students. However, for parts of this thesis, I have adopted the term, ‘student’ because it is the most common term used among program participants where this research was conducted, but also, it highlights the passive behaviours (teacher knows best, students should follow rules, students’ agency is contained, etc.) these people are subjected to throughout their journey to learn English in adult ESL programs.

Pronouns

The representations of he/she and his/her are systemically biased. The goal to achieve equality amongst all genders continues to disrupt all facets of society. For this research, I was mindful of the representations of pronouns in academic scholarship and throughout the duration of conducting this research.

I have chosen to represent scholarship with non-gendered pronouns (or no pronouns) because it should not matter what gender contributed to the field. Additionally, the pronoun

‘they’ and its variants are endorsed by APA 7th Edition (American Psychological Association, 2020). Lastly, I do not want to assume one’s gender based on my personal gendered ideologies of a name, so the pronoun ‘they’ and its variants are represented in scholarly discussions.

However, gender *does* matter in discussions pertaining to participants because of the implications it has on their lives. Self-identified pronouns were retained in sections of this thesis that related to participants because they were explicitly stated by the participant, and these pronouns provide insights to traditional gendered roles amongst men and women.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a language teacher, I have always tried to find new ways to best support students in the class. Many newcomers attend adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to acquire language and cultural understandings of the place they now call home. During my 20-year career as an ESL teacher, I have had many conversations with newcomers in which I have come to understand that they often aspire to become equal members of society, to communicate effectively with their children who live here, and to be confident, capable, and independent citizens. Based on this understanding, I have chosen to undertake an empowering approach to teaching in my own pedagogical practices, one that is consistent with critical pedagogy, which I describe in more depth in Chapter 2. My intention as an educator, however, has been complicated by ideologies that underpin pedagogy, program policies, and the availability of resources to support teaching. The dissonance between my ideologies about the practice of teaching ESL to adult immigrants and the ideologies of the ESL language training program is what has motivated my research interest in implementing a critical pedagogical approach.

Rationale for this Research Study

Conducting an action research and practitioner inquiry research study into the implementation of critical pedagogical approach in an English language classroom is important because language programs are a gateway for newcomers to integrate and flourish in their new country. Unfortunately, for newcomers learning the English language, there are many obstacles and barriers that can hinder success. Hence, the ESL teacher needs to understand how external influences, such as policies and program resources, as well as their own pedagogical practices may either mitigate those obstacles and barriers or allow them to adversely affect student achievement. Unfortunately, while there has been valuable research conducted in the field of

critical pedagogy within a North American context, the research is relatively limited with respect to the ESL teacher's experience of implementing critical pedagogy with adult learners with low proficiency in English.

Like many critical scholars before me, I believe institutionalized education is a political act (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983). Although the Canadian government funds several adult ESL programs, this initiative is complicated with an abundance of political outcomes that do not serve the best interests of newcomers. Freire (1970) maintains that education is never neutral. The political nature of critical pedagogy aims to provide freedom as opposed to conformity in education. As such, this study seeks to enhance the adult ESL programming landscape by demonstrating how critical pedagogical approaches can effectively support and enrich the learning and teaching experiences of participants.

Proponents of critical pedagogy have pointed to its positive influence on "students' stronger engagement with curriculum, empowerment through dialogue and involvement in their communities, critiques of their cultural norms, and participation in patriarchal countries/communities" (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015, p. 254). Also, because schools and classrooms are the site of dominant ideologies in society (Auerbach, 1993; Benesch, 1999; Canagarajah, 2005; Giroux, 1983), adopting a critical pedagogical approach to English language learning may help reveal problematic beliefs and practices in the educational system and greater society that may lead to marginalization of new immigrants. ESL teacher and students working together to address these inequities through critical pedagogy practices can help to challenge forms of oppression in society (Kumaravadivelu, 2016), with the ultimate benefit of creating a more just society for both immigrants and resident Canadians (Bruenig, 2011).

Finally, reflective practice has been shown to be a critical element in teaching (Schön, 1987, 1992) and particularly within the field of teaching ESL (Farrell, 2015). Examining the implementation of critical pedagogy in an ESL classroom as seen through the experiences and perspectives of one teacher can inform English language teaching approaches, and potentially lead to innovations in language teacher education and curricular innovation.

Amira's Story

To provide some background to this research study, I now present a fictional depiction of what I believe to be the immigrant experience. Amira, the main character in this story, is not a real person but rather represents a compilation of experiences I have witnessed as an adult ESL teacher and that have been expressed to me by numerous ESL students. Her story serves to orient readers to many of the complex challenges faced by adult ESL students and teachers who facilitate their learning. The challenges expressed in Amira's story were the inspiration for my research study.

Amira came to Canada as a refugee from Somalia. Back home, the philosophy of, "it takes a village to raise a child" rang true within her community. She relied on her community and extended family to help support her in raising her four young children, and at the same time, there was value and dependency on her role in her family and community. She was a vital member of her family; she proudly took care of important domestic duties so that her husband could work and financially support their family. She participated considerably in the wellbeing of her children, and as a result, they thrived in their schoolwork and community activities. Amira felt valued, respected, and accomplished. In addition, when her husband preceded her to settle in Canada, with the support of her extended family, she managed the care and control of the household until her husband was able to sponsor her and their children to come to Canada.

When Amira arrived in Canada, her life drastically changed. Her husband lived in an area of the city that had a reputation for crime, poverty, and gang violence. He chose this area because that was all he could afford. Furthermore, it had the benefits of urban living; schools and stores were within walking distance, and other Somalis lived close by. However, Amira was unfamiliar with the language and culture surrounding her. The community she once relied on no longer existed, and her children were adapting to the changes without Amira's in-depth understandings of the language, cultural practices, or people around her.

Although Amira lived amongst Somalis, these people were not from her tribe, and the conflicts within her country followed to the new country in which she now lived. In addition, there were new realities of these circumstances that Amira was required to process at the same time. In Somalia, the expectations, and interactions with people from other tribes were familiar and predictable, but in Canada, these relations lacked common ground.

Amira had heard from one of her husband's acquaintances about a free government-funded program to help her learn English. The name of the program was Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). She enrolled in this language program for many reasons. She wanted to apply for Canadian citizenship as soon as possible. On the citizenship application, one requirement is to supply proof that a potential citizen has a moderate level of speaking and listening skills in English or French. These language skills would be assessed during an interview with a government official when Amira took her citizenship test. Amira believed that having a Canadian passport would provide her with a respectable status in her community, and more importantly, enable her to travel easily. It had been five years since she has last seen her family back home. Amira also wanted to learn English so that she could talk to her children's teachers directly rather than relying on her husband or a family friend for information. She felt

learning English was necessary and planned on improving it in order to be an involved parent in her children's education. In Somalia, Amira took immense pride in being involved in this aspect of her children's lives and communicated confidently with school staff. In Canada, she started to feel disconnected from her children because they began speaking English at home and refused to speak Somali with her, and her English wasn't strong enough to talk to the teachers at school.

While settling into her new country, Amira felt isolated, lonely, sad, and depressed. She felt removed from so many things that her children were involved in, including their school activities and interactions with their friends. When attempting to preserve the language and culture that she was familiar with, she faced strife with those around her, her husband, and most importantly, her children. She needed the assistance of one of her children or her husband to do tasks that she did easily back home. For example, in Canada, if she needed to go to the bank to make a withdrawal, she sought the assistance of her 12-year-old daughter. Being unable to accomplish these tasks independently left Amira feeling disempowered.

When Amira started the language program, the assessment center determined that it was Amira's first time in a formal educational setting. The war in her country had prevented her from attending school and her parents had expected her to help out at home. Nevertheless, Amira was thankful and determined to improve her situation by accessing the program's offerings. She believed that this opportunity would help her gain Canadian citizenship and teach her the language she needed to speak English proficiently.

Back home, teachers were held with high regard, and respecting them meant to obey and listen well. The curriculum and lesson content were pre-determined. There was an understanding that students were expected to learn, and teachers were expected to teach. Amira assumed that her notions of formal education would be reflected in this new Canadian class.

When the class began, Amira faced a few problems. First of all, she missed class often when her children were ill, or when she had to attend to an appointment. These absences were addressed by program staff, and at times, left Amira feeling ashamed and incompetent. Secondly, Amira struggled to relate to some of the content taught in class. She was a devout Muslim and often felt that her religion and cultural practices did not have a place in the class. For example, in one lesson, students were learning how to write birthday cards, but Amira believed this type of celebration was apostasy for Muslims. She was perplexed on how to communicate this, especially since using her L1 was forbidden in the class, and she thought it may come across as being disrespectful to the teacher. Furthermore, she found it interesting that ‘winter break’ and other long weekends aligned with Christian holidays, yet Eid, an important Muslim holiday, was simply an ordinary school day. These circumstances left Amira feeling conflicted and disheartened. Once again, Amira felt powerless.

Based on my personal experiences with immigrant English language learners, I believe Amira’s story represents the experiences of many newcomers when coming to Canada. Learning English can afford newcomers the opportunity to seek work, advance their education, connect with their children, engage in community initiatives, acquire citizenship, and perhaps most importantly, become equal members of society. However, my experiences over the years of working with learners in adult ESL programs have shown me that many newcomers have concerns about raising their children in a new country, finding and maintaining jobs for financial stability, and adapting to the cultural, social, and political changes of living in a new country. My observations have helped me to understand that the ease with which immigrants successfully adjust to their new culture and community can be significantly impacted by the resources they have access to, such as adult ESL community programs.

Additionally, this illustrative example of Amira's situation provides insight into the complexity of the learning and teaching environment that ESL educators commonly encounter when striving to assist newcomers. As an ESL teacher, I seek to approach language teaching in a critical and socially just way that supports students to be active, equal, and inclusive citizens in the community. My aim is to foster a learning environment that recognizes, respects, and values the diversity of individuals, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, feels a sense of belonging and equal participation. These ideals are in concert with the implementation of a critical pedagogical approach in the language classroom (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015), and they frame the purpose for my conducting this research study.

Research Context

This research study was conducted in an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom for adults with low proficiency in English; many of these students have had limited formal educational training and share common features from Amira's story. The program was situated in a large city that is known for its tapestry of diverse cultural influences and interactions. The research took place in a federally-funded ESL Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. LINC was created to help newcomers integrate into Canadian society (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002). In Chapter 3, a more comprehensive outline of the research setting will be provided, offering further details of the LINC program, as well as the school and the specific low-proficiency LINC classroom in which the research study was conducted.

Canadian Citizenship, Canadian Official Languages, and Language Training

As noted in Amira's story, obtaining Canadian citizenship may be a key goal for many newcomers who attend LINC programs; developing English or French language skills play an essential role in obtaining that citizenship (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada,

2021). The commonly held notion that most Canadians come from immigrants reflects that, at some point, with the exception of Indigenous Peoples, *every* Canadian has descended from an immigrant. For most multi-generational Canadians, their ancestors were French and British Europeans who, in most cases, spoke English or French. As the country grew, immigrants from non-English and non-French speaking countries joined Canada. An effect of this increasing diversity in the Canadian population, preserving the language of the ‘land’ from two out of the three “founding peoples” of Canada (English and French; not Indigenous) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011, p. 10) has become of key importance and is mandated in legal documents such as the Official Languages Act (1969). Thus, as a result of the language proficiency requirement, many immigrants who wish to acquire Canadian citizenship may need to enrol in adult ESL programs. These programs offer a gateway toward citizenship.

It is of importance to note that the Canadian government plans to increase immigration to over 500 000 individuals per year (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). A reasonable inference from this plan is that a significant number of these newcomers might require language training and support to facilitate their adaptation into the new country, given that the majority of new immigrants typically originate from non-English or non-French speaking countries (Immigration Canada, 2020). The need to be proficient in one of Canada’s official languages is a relatively high-stakes operation for newcomers in so many areas of life such as work, citizenship, parent/child relationships, and education.

Language and Culture

In addition to being necessary for citizenship, knowledge of English (or French) is a valuable life skill for anyone living in Canada. Newcomers need to be able to communicate for many purposes, including gaining employment, performing community tasks (such as banking,

grocery shopping, and talking to the police), and attending post-secondary education. Sadly, immigrants who raise children in Canada risk becoming disconnected from their loved ones because, unlike their parents, children are learning English (and/or French) and being acculturated in school and extra-curricular activities. Although it is important for children to learn the languages and cultural practices of their parents, it is additionally essential for parents to learn the language in which their children are immersed. A popular expression states that ‘knowledge is power,’ and I would extend that sentiment to incorporate having the knowledge of language and culture in the community in which you live. This expression is derived from Foucault (1991), who noted that language is a fundamental mechanism in society that serves to create, shape, and maintain cultural norms. Recognition of the intertwining of language learning with culture has long been evident in the field of linguistics (Brown, 1994; Byram & Feng, 2004; Kramsch, 2004; Woolard & Schieffelin, 2004). In acknowledgment of that now accepted relationship between language and culture, my experiences of teaching language to learners from a diversity of cultures has led me to reflect on what ‘culture’ we are teaching immigrants in the ESL classroom. Indeed, my thoughts have often turned to consider the ways in which ESL educators can approach their practice to ensure the ‘culture’ being taught embodies concepts of equality and social justice, and where students are empowered to voice their challenges in adapting to both a new language and a new culture. Critical pedagogy offers one such way. As Sarroub and Quadros (2015) have explained, “In utilizing critical pedagogy in the classroom, teachers must question their own practices in the process to construct knowledge” (p. 253), particularly considering that classroom practices are forms of ideological production that reflect the power structures inherent in knowledge construction in both the school and in society (Giroux, 1983).

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

In recognition of Sarroub and Quadros' (2015) call for the questioning of teacher practices, I have been driven to consider how my own teaching practice might be better oriented to incorporate critical pedagogy, and this consideration has formed the basis of my approach to my research study in two ways. First, I feel it is important to question how one might engage in critical reflection on the approaches the various levels of government have taken in developing programming to construct a nation of immigrants, and what impact that ideology may have on the day-to-day practicalities of teaching in an English language classroom. Second, I believe it is important for ESL teachers to spend time examining whether their pedagogical practices are in providing support that is both empowering and offers the best life chances for newcomers who access the programs. To this end, the purpose of this research study is to examine and reflect upon my own experiences with implementing a critical pedagogical approach in my role as a teacher within my ESL classroom.

A singular guiding research question directs the trajectory of this study. Its selection is grounded in the recognition that various factors critically impact adult ESL learning, including politically driven funding, programming content, teaching influences, and the inherent features of the program. These factors are integral components shaping the experiences of both teachers and students. They influence the English language learning experience, which is deeply intertwined with the broader societal roles that these students may later undertake within Canadian society. The question is as follows:

What are the experiences and reflective perspectives of an ESL teacher implementing a critical pedagogy approach within an LINC/ESL classroom for adults with low proficiency in English?

It is important to highlight that, although the research predominately focuses on an analysis of the data that I as the teacher-research experienced with student participants in an ESL classroom, a participatory action research approach was also utilized. Student participants greatly contributed to the topics and ideas shared in this project, and they consistently guided me by identifying the most important aspects on which to focus. Their voices are encapsulated in this dissertation and reflect every aspect of my critical journey.

Situating Myself - Who Am I?

Understanding my identity and position within this research study is crucial because this thesis is rooted in my experiences and development as an educator. My journey as an ESL instructor and critical pedagogue reflects my desire from a young age for social justice. My core belief systems have always tended to lead me to paths of seeking out egalitarian and unified social environments, which challenged situations that did not seem innately right for the good of humanity. I have always been considered the black sheep of my white, middle-class family for standing up for notions of equality and democracy. With this attitude, I have been negatively labelled as someone who prefers to stir up trouble and provoke issues that do not need attention.

Reflecting on my own background, I recall experiencing discord amongst family and friends as it related to different races, religions, cultures, languages, and gender whereby white, Euro-Canadian cisgendered male mindsets consistently assumed a position of authority. I feel that is similar to the obstacles of applying critical pedagogical practices in adult ESL programming; stakeholders with power do not condone discourses that promote equality and social justice. This study has allowed me to question my own privileged beliefs, and attempts to uncover broader political, social, and economic predispositions. ~~The child within me would approve!~~

I was born in Toronto to Canadian-born parents and like many children in Canada, I started school in junior kindergarten in a publicly-funded school. From my recollection, every classroom I was in included rows of desks and chairs that faced a blackboard. At the front, the teacher almost always had their desk facing the students. They typically talked to us standing up in the front of the class with the blackboard as their teaching aid. I was taught to see teachers as authority figures and also, not to question what was taught. I was trained to sit quietly and do what I was told. In a way, these practices left an imprint on me; they were normalized patterns of behaviour. This approach continued throughout my education, from elementary school to university. As a young girl I remember playing “teacher” with friends and holding my ruler like I was the boss and could control anything that I wanted to. I am sure at times there were glimpses of questioning in what I was being taught (and how), but the main memories that resonate with me are what I have described above.

For some reason, I have always been drawn to helping people. When I chose teaching ESL as my profession, I had the same sentiments; I wanted to help my students successfully *and equally* integrate into Canadian culture. In my post-secondary studies, I was naturally attracted to theories and practices that in some manner drew attention to disempowerment and social justice. My undergrad studies in sociology focused on ideas in Marxism, feminism, and queer theory. When I developed a focus in ESL, I was intrigued by the work of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Virginia Sauvé, Suresh Canagarajah, and other like-minded scholars. These scholars provide rich discussions and compassionate understandings of the critical pedagogical movement. In some ways, the concept of ‘critical pedagogy’ was a starting point to my desire to want to contribute to changing immigrant experiences for the better. The idea of transforming language teaching to promote equality and inclusiveness appeals to me because I believe that immigrants are

extremely vulnerable in their roles as language learners. In addition, I believe that the teacher-student dynamic has traditionally been an authoritative/submissive partnership, and this relationship is something I want to critically evaluate; especially with adult immigrants who possess rich wisdom and knowledges. Over the years of teaching, I have experienced many challenges in implementing critical pedagogical practices. This research explores the features of adult ESL programming through the lens of critical pedagogy, aiming to discern how these elements impact the learning and teaching experiences of participants.

I would like to share an experience that draws attention to some possible reasons why it is hard to change the status quo. I remember a recent teaching opportunity I had at a local university. I was a new instructor to the school and wanted to teach in a manner that reflected my post-graduate ideals, which included facilitating the empowerment of my students. This position was a part-time 3-month contract with limited opportunity for continued employment and no prospect for full-time work. It was a second job in addition to my full-time government-funded LINC position. As much as I love teaching LINC, the income I received for this work does not adequately support my middle-class standard of living.

With all my newfound ideas on creating an empowering classroom, I wanted to physically change the space of the classroom, so, before class began, I spent about 30 minutes arranging the desks in a circle. I embraced my creativity too; I planned on using the white board and projector as a collaborative teaching tool. The purpose for arranging the classroom this way was so that students would share the space equally with me as their instructor. My goal was to ‘neutralize’ the space, and I put a lot of effort to do that in the beginning. My new class arrived, and everything seemed to proceed as I had anticipated.

The following day, I received an email from the school kindly asking me to put back the desks as I had found them at the end of each class meeting. It reached a point where the task of rearranging the classroom space was too much of a hassle. The desks were heavy, and with exception of the first day, I had a limited window of time to access the class prior to and after my class because other instructors used the space as well. As the course proceeded, I found myself just standing in the front of the class and lecturing the students. This reversion was also because I had a precise syllabus to follow and in order for students to take the tests, I had to cover all the material in the course outline. The syllabus was provided to me by the program director, and I did not have any control over it. I felt defeated and tired because this course was taught in the evenings, and I had also spent the day teaching at my ‘regular’ job. As a result, these circumstances made it next to impossible to carry out my newfound empowering techniques. I ended up doing it as I remembered as a child; the teacher standing at the front of the class and delivering information to a receptive group of undergraduate students. This is important to note because as Freire (1970) discusses, the ideal of teaching in front of a classroom reflects an authoritative stance and contradicts the spirit of critical pedagogical practices. Experiences like this showcase the intrinsic complexities of change creating obstacles, regardless of the desire to *want* to change.

The Notion of Empowering

The concept of empowerment has faced some criticism, especially in a situation such as mine where I have colonial ancestry and my students do not. I want to acknowledge that my white, middle-class upbringing is present in this research, and my racial experiences differ greatly from those whom I teach. In addition, although I continue to grow and become more informed of the implications colonization and race has on ideologies, the dynamics of this

situation creates a lot of vulnerability for my students. For this reason, I would like to clarify my understanding of this concept and note that throughout this research, I subscribed to a particular way of understanding empowerment in relationship to my role and student participants. Firstly, I do *not* take the stance that *I* have the ability to empower my students. In contrast, I believe that knowledge is shared and decided collaboratively when education is in play. These is a feature of empowerment I adopt in the classroom. As a result, although my position in the creation of shared knowledge is different from that of the student participants in this research, I do not see myself as a ‘saviour’ for empowerment but rather, as a conduit of critical perspectives. Like student participants, I had rich and valuable knowledge to share in this research, yet the choice of how that knowledge was received or critically analysed was individually decided upon and collectively shared, honoured, and respected to the best of my abilities. My purpose as an educator is to support students in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed in order to be equal members of society to the best of my understanding, role, and ability. This purpose was extended as a guiding force in this study.

Overview of Chapters

This chapter introduced my research and highlights the need to critically explore adult ESL programming, particularly in low-proficiency classrooms.

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature on this topic. More specifically, I provide an overview of the history of adult ESL programming in Canada and considerations to its implementation. The second half of Chapter 2 outlines a broad overview of the term, critical pedagogy, and subsequently, reviews how this approach to teaching has influenced the field of adult ESL programming. I conclude with a definition of reflective practice and the role of reflection in learning, emphasizing its significance in teaching and research.

Chapter 3 focuses on methodology and my role as a *teacher, participant, and researcher*. I discuss the qualitative research I conducted, which utilizes features of case study, action research, participatory action research approach, and practitioner inquiry. I narrate rich descriptions of the setting, participants, and methods of collecting data in order to provide insights to the circumstances on which this study was grounded. Considerations are given to ethical concerns, validity and research limitations.

Chapter 4 is organized around my research question. The findings concentrate on the critical features of this research and are analysed accordingly. Although my research question raised good starting points of discussions, the data reveals thematic findings that were derived from critical reflections.

Chapter 5 highlights the key barriers in adult ESL programming but, most importantly, discusses key changes that adult ESL educators and accompanying participants in the field should consider in seeking to develop more critical English language classrooms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discuss the literature underpinning this study. This chapter is organized in two main parts: The first part provides a landscape of adult ESL programming in Canada and reviews the chronological circumstances in which federal ESL programs have evolved from the onset until current times. Additionally, a critical review of social and political discourses discusses guiding principles to program development. The second part examines the theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy as a general practice and as relevant to the specific context of ESL. In this latter section, I delve into the literature, incorporating considerations and scholarly examples that not only reveal key challenges impacting critical pedagogical goals in adult ESL programming but also contribute to the comprehensive groundwork, framing the research methodologies employed in this study. This chapter concludes with an overview of reflective practice, given its significance in this research study.

History of Adult ESL Programming in Canada

The Government of Canada's website describes Canada as a "land of immigrants" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2011) and this is reflected in the millions of newcomers who have settled here in the last couple of decades. The need for immigration has been caused by low birth rates in Canada and an ageing population of Canadians; both factors that have impacted the labour force (Fleming, 2007). Subsequently, the need to populate the country has been dependent on bringing in immigrants who have or will gain skills needed to develop the economy and labour force (Fleming, 2007). Recent immigration projections from the federal government support Fleming's assertion with over 500 000 new immigrants projected to move to Canada annually over the next three years (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). With information in mind, there is a demand for immigrants to be viable

members of society. The need of a more populous nation was one of the starting points for the inception of government-funded ESL programming in Canada and it continues today.

With government support and funding, ESL programming has evolved over time and has developed in a manner where many new immigrants entering Canada can access free language training quickly and learn English or French taught by trained professionals. This portion provides an historical overview of how adult ESL language programming has evolved to its present-day practice. Notions about why these programs exist, who benefits from them, and their long-term implications have underpinned their funding and delivery.

The inception of federal ESL programs began after the Second World War and in the creation of the Citizenship Act in 1947 (Fleming, 2007; Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Prior to that, municipalities and provincial ministries had developed limited ESL programming, but on an ad hoc basis; the onus of surviving and settling primarily fell on immigrants themselves or the groups that recruited them here (Bettencourt, 2003a). From the beginning, federally-funded language learning was an important component in citizenship education (Burnaby, 2002). In the 1950s, the federal government allocated citizenship and language instruction funding to provinces; however, these agreements known as the Citizenship Instruction and Language Textbooks (CILT) program ceased in 1989 due to lack of conformity amongst the different provinces and reports indicating that funding was not being used for its intended purpose (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). In addition, in 1948, appointed federal settlement officers were responsible for arranging accommodation and employment for newcomers (Bettencourt, 2003a).

In 1966, the Department of Manpower and Immigration replaced Settlement Service (Bettencourt, 2003a) and a shift in ideology developed in this initiative. Immigrants were expected to adjust to mainstream government services and had an employment focus. This led to

the development of Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) in 1974, which targeted on helping newcomers learn “Canadian values” (Bettencourt, 2003a, p. 25). Volunteers played a crucial role in meeting the requirements for staffing teaching positions (Bettencourt, 2003b).

In 1978, the federal government also developed Canadian Job Strategies (CJS) program under the government ministry known as Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC). In this program, there was a shift in language learning from citizenship education to employment education. Fleming (2007) provides a comprehensive overview of this program. They note that included in this initiative, language instruction was provided for immigrants who could not find work due to their lack of language proficiency in one of Canada's two official languages: English and French. Furthermore, eligible candidates had to be the main family wage earner, which meant that mostly men participated, and many immigrants were ineligible because they had not qualified for unemployment insurance. Due to the lack of funding, the CJS program eventually ceased. Fleming notes that the main reason for this was the number of students enrolled in this program significantly underrepresented the number of people who required language training. They cite that restricted eligibility was a key contributor to this factor as women and immigrants with limited Canadian work experience were excluded from participating in this program. Fleming concludes that three other programs were developed to be more inclusive, however, poor funding conditions and lack of consistent training and resources lead to their demise as well.

English language citizenship programs were also mandated in the early 1980s by the Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms "to include the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes about 'rights and freedoms, equality of access, full participation,

ethnic and racial diversity, cultural and regional diversity, two official languages, constitutional monarchy, a federal system [of government] and national symbols'" (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 19, as cited in Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Furthermore, a binder of materials entitled *More of a Welcome Than a Test* was developed for English citizenship programs, which suggested critical approaches to citizenship instruction. This included participatory educational frameworks that encouraged students to learn how to be an active citizen rather than traditional pedagogy, which supported rote learning (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Due to lack of funding, the reliance on volunteer instructors, and the disbanding of an established working group, this material was forgone (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). The continual changes of programming, debating on whose responsibility language learning and settlement is, poor funding, lack of adequate resources, inadequate training, limited program eligibility, and dependency on volunteers contributed to the instability of programs designed to support immigrants migrating to Canada. In 1991, the Immigration Plan was launched to address these concerns (Bettencourt, 2003a).

Immigrant language training became a main federal priority for the first time in 1990 (Fleming, 2007). A four-year plan was developed to enlist more cooperation between the provincial and federal governments who had previously debated whose responsibility it was to provide language instruction for immigrants. Historically, ESL language instruction has been divided as to who is responsible for funding and delivery; the federal or provincial governments (Burnaby, 2002). This is in part because education is a provincial responsibility and immigration is a federal responsibility. In addition, recommendations made by a special advisory council made up of a variety of stakeholders in the field of immigration and settlement called for "greater consistency in adult ESL provision, the development of professional development and training

standards for teachers, valid language assessment tests, an increase in training periods, limits to class sizes, and national curriculum documents" (Fleming, 2007, p. 193).

Based on the recommendations of the council, two programs were developed in 1992: Labour Market Language Training (LMLT) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (Fleming, 2007). The more career focused, higher-level LMLT was offered only briefly and eventually discontinued in 1996 while LINC became the dominant program for publicly funded adult ESL instruction. Provincial governments continued to offer ESL classes as well, and unlike LINC programs that require permanent residence or refugee status, are accessible to Canadian citizens. While this study focuses on LINC programming, it is important to note that provincial programs share many of the goals and outcomes of federal programs. The next section reviews scholarship on the development of LINC, with a particular emphasis on the literature that criticizes LINC program initiatives.

Critical Overview of Adult ESL Programming in Canada

During the evolution of government-funded adult ESL programming in Canada, many political and social forces have impacted funding decisions. This section provides a critical overview of several driving influences.

One guiding factor in adult ESL programming relates to the perceptions of how the public views immigration. This is important to conceptualize because ‘free’ language programs have been a contentious political and social issue (Fleming, 2007). As Fleming notes, there is a portrayal of *us* (Canadians) doing *them* (immigrants) a favour, however, the practical need to populate Canada for economic and political gain should not be overlooked. Thus, one could equally argue that it is principally *us* who needs *them*. This ideological framework is important to

draw attention to because the notion of mainstream ideologies and how they affect critical approaches and language programming policies are highlighted in critical theories and practices.

Guo (2013) provides further details on the economic importance of immigration in a Canadian context. Similar to Fleming's examination, they suggest that not only does the Canadian economy need immigration to prosper, but successful integration is a key factor too. Guo adds some key insight about how race has been a key consideration in determining who to allow to immigrate to Canada. They present this information by offering four different phases to immigration and link it to the economic needs of the country as well as the preferred races during the different time periods. In the first phase (1867-1895), immigration was necessary for the development of the country and most importantly, to build the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). This phase received a lot of immigration from the United Kingdom and the United States. However, Chinese immigrants also came during this period and many aided in the development of the CPR. When the railway was completed, the Canadian government imposed the Chinese Immigration Act, which included a head tax for those immigrants who were only of Chinese origin. The amount of this tax made it impossible for many Chinese immigrants to stay in Canada and they were forced to leave or become separated from family who could not immigrate. Guo (2013) discusses the other phases and notes that when labour demands increased, immigration expanded to include other Europeans. When the labour market was low, there was a stronger preference for British immigrants and other Europeans. Non-Europeans were met with restrictions such as the head tax described above.

Derwing (2017) also explores how racism has played a key role in the immigration process early in the settlement of Canada. They uncover early documents that reinforced the ideal immigrant to be of British or American origin. Derwing cites early influencers in the

process of immigration and language training including the first known language training college founded by Reverend Alfred Fitzpatrick called Frontier College.

The main goal of immigration in the early 1900s was to assimilate immigrants to the colonial way of life (Derwing, 2017). In 1918, the preferred immigrant was perceived to be passive and docile as noted in Anderson's (1918) book on immigration education strategy:

There is no finer type of foreign immigrant to Canada than the Scandinavians. They are a close second, indeed if not equal, to the British and American Immigrants. The Scandinavians readily come assimilated to the new life of the Dominion; a very large proportion of them naturalize. They make frugal, industrious citizens, and asset to any young country. (p. 200)

Anderson also discusses how new immigrants should assimilate to Anglo-Saxon ideals and maintains that older immigrants will never be able to truly assimilate to Canadian values to become "true Canadians" (p. 9). The author goes on to further state how to address "retarding influences" in order to progress immigrants into a 'true Canadian.'

These ideals are the foundations of adult ESL programming in Canada. Successful integration has and continues to be a one-sided practice in immigration discourse; historically, immigrants are expected to change, and the assumption is that "our way" is the right way. Li (2003) maintains that British-based norms have been the assimilatory goals of Canadian policies and in language programming historically and continues today. The expectation is that "they" become like "us." This "othering" mentality has been displayed in federally-funded documents such as, *Canada: A Source Book for Orientation, Language and Settlement Workers* (Employment and Immigration, 1992) whereby as Derwing (2017) points out, the book, which is intended to help guide people who support newcomers, provides unsubstantiated prescriptive

examples of Canadian practices. For example, one topic describes the urination practices of Canadians and outlines what is and is not acceptable in Canada. Derwing challenges the information in the book and highlights that despite the fact that urinating in public is illegal in Canada (and the assumption is that Canadians do not urinate in public), there are Canadians who commit this offence regularly at events such as outdoor hockey games.

These understandings of what it means to be Canadian has influenced the role in which adult ESL language programming has evolved and been conceptualized socially and politically. The racist undertones in the immigration process and colonial beliefs about what it means to be Canadian has greatly impacted the process to “become one of us;” there has been a one-sided disadvantage to those who immigrate here with rich cultures and languages.

Development of LINC and Adult ESL Programming

As LINC became a primary focus for federally-funded adult ESL programming, there were significant initiatives taken to create professionalism and standardization in adult ESL programming. The next section reviews the key developments and includes the establishment of language proficiency levels, curricula and texts, policies, professional accreditation and hiring practices, and the topic of citizenship as a key interest for newcomers who access adult ESL programs. In this section, there is a focus on LINC because this is the program in which my research was grounded, and it is a key program many newcomers first access when seeking language support.

LINC is a federally funded program with a mandate "to provide basic language instruction to adult newcomers in both official languages and to facilitate the settlement and

integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society" (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*¹, 2002, p. 6). In contrast to previous programs that explicitly focused on employment and citizenship needs, a main strategy of LINC was to address the broader language needs of newcomers arriving to Canada and promote comprehensive current teaching methodologies and language benchmarks (Bettencourt, 2003b). With the establishment of LINC, there was improved funding, a higher degree of accountability in relation to attendance and record keeping, and in some cases, learners are eligible to receive public transportation costs, childminding services and/or social assistance while attending the program (Fleming, 2007). Full time and part time programs are available too.

Along with the development of LINC programming, additional resources were created to aid in its implementation, including the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) and *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (2000; 2012).² These are primary documents widely used in LINC programs. Both resources are expanded on below.

The federal government funded the development of the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002), and it serves to assist educators deliver consistent and relevant language instruction. The Guidelines are organized along a set of twelve themes: At Home in Our Community and World, Banking, Customer Service, and Telephone, Canada, Canadian Culture, Canadian Law, Commercial Services and Business, Community and Government Services, Education, Employment, Family and Relationships, Health and Safety, and Travel and Transportation. This

¹ The LINC Curriculum Guidelines was funded by the Federal Government and developed by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (2002).

² The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) were funded by the Federal Government. For the CLB 2000, refer to Pawlikowska-Smith (2000) and for the CLB 2012 refer to Hajer & Kaskens (2012).

document is “intended to help LINC instructors and program coordinators in the province of Ontario establish measurable outcomes so that the standards in LINC programs across Ontario are consistent and reflect the needs of ESL learners’ (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002, p. 6). The document includes sample needs assessments to determine what topics should be covered in class as well as syllabus and lesson plan templates. It outlines five language levels in four different language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The theoretical framework underpinning the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* draws on theories supporting the development of communicative competence (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002, p. 7) and identifies a set of five competency areas: linguistic, textual, functional, sociocultural, and strategic. Within this theoretical framework, there is emphasis in second language learning that draws on interaction in social and cultural contexts, which differs from traditional approaches that only primarily focused on linguistic, textual, and functional competencies (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)* (2000) were also created at this time to establish a national framework of standards of language proficiency. This document provides a descriptive overview of twelve language proficiency levels. It highlights language proficiency in terms of the above-mentioned competencies and categorizes them into four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, sample performance tasks are outlined in each level and skill area. Each level also divides what learners can do using in the following categories: social interaction, giving/receiving instructions, getting things done (suasion), and giving/receiving information. For example, a CLB 1 speaker should be able to request assistance (getting things done) by saying, “Help me, please” (*CLB*, 2000, p. 7). Alternatively, when

listening, a CLB 1 student should be able to understand a person saying, “Can you help me?” (CLB, 2000, p.19).

The *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* is based on the first seven levels of the *CLB*, which explicitly correspond to LINC levels in the document. Prior to developing the *CLB*, programs across the country measured language proficiency in a variety of ways from inconsistently labelling levels as “intermediate,” for example, without providing clear guidelines about what that meant (Peirce & Stewart, 1997). The most current *CLB* was published in 2012 and continues to be used in LINC programs across the country.

Both the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* and the *CLB* support a teaching method that focuses on what learners can do in the above-mentioned competency areas; linguistic, textual, functional, sociocultural, and strategical. The goals of these documents were to support more consistent and transferable understanding of proficiency levels across the country and within provinces. The *CLB* (2000) clearly states that they are not designed as curriculum material, and “do not dictate local curricula and syllabuses” (p. VIII). However, there has been some criticism of the *CLB* and ESL curricula.

There has been some criticism on the *CLB* and the subjectivity of its content. Haque and Cray (2007) suggest that the *CLB* document ultimately prescribes what topics should be taught and furthermore, limits what could be considered learning and/or if those values reflect the language needs of learners. Despite the *CLBs* explicitly stating that they are not a curriculum document, critical analyses by Haque and Cray (2007) suggest that many teachers use the *CLB* to guide their topics. The *CLB* and *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* inadvertently limit educators the choice of what and how to teach.

Another criticism of the *CLB* and other resources relate to how learners are represented in these documents. Fleming (2010), states:

Despite what multicultural policy statements might claim to the contrary, key curriculum and assessment documents tend to position ESL learners as relatively powerless, passive, and atomized recipients of programming designed to normalize them into the dominant culture. (p. 589).

Fleming (2015) proposes that there is a hidden agenda in the *CLB*. They expand further by noting that there is not a lot of representation of active citizenship, yet rather, passive ones of learners who should adhere to the status quo of the privileged. In Fleming's analysis of the *CLB*, they note that, "through admission and omission the document represented good citizens as obedient workers" (p. 31). They note that while the document provides examples of trade unions and/or collective agreements, it also provides significant space on how to be polite and respectful on "trivial" (p. 31) issues such as lunchroom cleanliness and being polite to one's employer. It also attempts to mold them "into a monolithic version of Canadian national identity" (Fleming, 2003, p. 66).

The *CLB* is a key text in adult ESL in Canada. It is a document approved and funded by the federal government of Canada to help educators measure language proficiency. For these reasons, ESL professionals rely heavily on using this resource to guide them in their teaching and assessing. As Morgan and Fleming (2009) note, the discursive complexity of this document affects the learning experience a great deal. They suggest that the hidden curriculum in this material "promotes a dutiful, obedient, and passive engagement with the politics of the nation-state" (p. 276). The authors also contend that the *CLB* movement tends to adhere to the Canadian

norms of social behaviours, which favours particular social groups that are not commonly present in LINC classrooms.

Gibb (2008) further states that although texts alone do not give a complete understanding of how policies (or specifically in this case, curriculum guidelines and assessment documents) are enacted, they do offer a lens on how knowledge is represented. The *CLB* only provides sample tasks related to themes and topics in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* and as such, subjectively limits the content taught in class. Fleming further concurs that the *CLB* is a “*de facto* curriculum document” (Fleming, 2015, p. 31). They discuss Giroux’s idea that published and commonly used documents such as the *CLB* and/or *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* become agents of legitimation of knowledge. Although the two documents discussed have been developed to create standardization and consistently, they have also constructed learners as “infantilized and passive, and unable to exercise the rights of citizenship until they have mastered a highly advanced level of English language proficiency” (Fleming, 2015, p. 34). This criticism highlights the importance of critically thinking about how students are represented in texts.

Many books and resources have been created in order to reflect the themes and topics outlined in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines*. Critical discourse analysis, a form of criticality which looks at the way in which texts perpetuate imbalances of power can be helpful to this discussion because a lot of teaching in adult ESL programs rely heavily on available materials. The reasons for this are reflected in my own personal experiences but articulated in research as well. For example, Haque and Cray’s (2007) work points out that the constraints teachers have in their workplace impede them from creating curricula and resources that improve their teaching strategies (and for the purpose of this research, critical reflection, and its implementation). They cite poor working conditions, multi-leveled classrooms, and lack of prep time as factors that

create stressful working conditions. As a result, many teachers become reliant on ready-made resources to help them do their job. The constraints noted by the above authors support Gore's claim that teachers lack the resources and time to implement critical approaches in their classroom (as cited in Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Thomson and Derwing (2004) echo the concern for poor working conditions and add that because of the constraints, more and more teachers rely on published texts to carry out their lessons. As such, critical practices are difficult to implement without improving the working conditions of educators in the field of adult ESL.

Materials published to complement the themes and topics in LINC and other related programs have been investigated to reveal that they do not support empowering learning. Ilieva's (2000) research examines identity and how it is portrayed in adult ESL textbooks. The author uncovers how views of culture portrayed in common ESL texts do not reflect or accommodate the points of view of impoverished individuals. Rather, the representation of culture in these texts depict mainstream Canadians who are middle-class citizens. As a result, many students who access adult ESL programs lack the commonality and/or relevance of the representations depicted in these texts. Gulliver's (2010) article also points out how in another commonly known textbook used in adult ESL programs, the notion of success for immigrants is grossly misrepresented. As a result, these types of texts legitimize impractical aspirations for learners to attain. They advocate for educators to critically engage in the texts, and furthermore, encourages educators to recognize the negative impact that these texts have on the majority of immigrants who access adult ESL programs.

Fleming (2010) questions the nature and purpose of adult ESL programming in Canada. In their study of Punjabi-speaking immigrants enrolled in an evening adult ESL class, they maintain that "key curriculum and assessment documents tend to position ESL learners as

relatively powerless, passive, and atomized recipients of programming designed to normalize them into a dominant culture" (p. 589). One example that Fleming provides in their analysis of the *CLB*, and other related documents, point to the fact that the materials do not once mention the word "vote" in their documents (p. 596). This exemplifies how one of the most important aspects of Canadian citizenship (voting) is transparently absent in highly influential ESL documents. Fleming further suggests that by focusing on normative references to what it means to be Canadian as depicted in the *CLB* and other curriculum/assessment documents, newcomers are denied the opportunity to be active creators of their new Canadian identity. They argue that it would be extremely rare for newcomers to attain the sense of full citizenship offered up in standard ESL documents. There is also a sense of a singular culture in these documents which newcomers must conform to and they ignore the active construction of the plenitude of cultural diversity in countries that have a high influx of immigrants. In addition, Fleming maintains that the topics discussed in these documents seem somewhat petty such as shopping and consumerism yet lack subject matter with substance such as understanding employment rights and community participation.

Haque and Cray (2007) expand the current interest on how teachers understand and realize policies in adult ESL programs. They examine how intended policies are open to subjective interpretations based on teachers' beliefs and the context in which teaching takes place. Their study of 25 LINC teachers reveals how the *CLB* limited and undermined their ability to address the needs, wants, and expectations of the students in their classroom. In addition, the authors note how the teaching conditions impaired their ability to teach effectively. The principal areas of concern were, "isolation, lack of job security, lack of professional development, underfunded programs, continuous intake, low wages, and problems with professional

accreditation (p. 637). Many of the participants mentioned that if their spouse was not the main source of income, they had to supplement their income with other work. The authors strongly advocate for addressing the LINC policies and its implementation to improve the working conditions of ESL teachers.

In their research, Faez and Valeo (2012) also uncover a tendency in TESL programs to prioritize theoretical aspects of teaching, while neglecting practical aspects of the field. Consequently, this affects new teachers' sense of preparedness and their chances of success in their new careers.

Teaching Standards

Another area to explore and review is the development of teaching standards as they have also undergone significant changes in the last few decades in adult ESL programming in Canada.

Along with establishing LINC and other ESL language programming across the country and developing key documents such as the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* and the *CLB*, professionals in the field sought to establish teaching standards in LINC programs and other provincial programs. Starting in 1992, professional standards for adult ESL programs started to develop across the country and the two main goals of developing teaching standards were to develop the profession itself and increase respect for the profession Sivell (2005). In Ontario, the Standards and Certification Project was officially completed on March 31, 2001, which from that point on, required all LINC instructors to be TESL Ontario certified (Tilson, 2005). Established in 1972, Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) Ontario is a non-profit organization and is recognized in the region for the support and advocacy of ESL professionals (TESL Ontario, 2021). In order to receive accreditation, teachers must complete a university degree and complete a TESL program approved by TESL Ontario.

Valeo and Faez (2013) note that recognized TESL teacher education accreditation programs address: “the professional qualifications of teacher educators (e.g., education and experience), the provision of an adequate practicum, and a minimum of instructional hours devoted to specific language-teaching skills and knowledge” (p. 5). However, despite the main goals of developing adult ESL teaching professionalism, the authors report that there is an elevated risk of professional attrition of novice ESL teachers due to poor working conditions and lack of job stability. The authors note that although programs aim to be flexible by offering part time and evening classes, teachers suffer from the consequences of these circumstances. As a result, many teachers hold multiple teaching positions and, in some cases, with different organizations. One suggestion made by Valeo and Faez (2013) is to incorporate more government accountability for job stability for teachers.

Another issue this section reviews is exploring the reasons why students access LINC and other government-funded programs. As the next section outlines, although successful integration is a key goal documented in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002), this idealization is understood differently by different people. Specifically, obtaining citizenship is one aspect of integration that this research addresses.

Citizenship in LINC

There have been many changes to the Citizenship Act of 1947 over the years. From 2003-2009, more stringent criteria for Canadian citizenship were implemented in order to “enhance the value of citizenship” (Winter, 2014). In addition, on November 1, 2012, a new requirement to the application process was added: providing proof of language proficiency (Government of Canada, 2014). This policy took effect the year before my research was conducted. Under this regulation, applicants must provide proof of language proficiency in speaking and listening at CLB 4. This

can be accomplished by taking a government-approved third-party test, acquiring a secondary or post-secondary diploma in one of Canada's official languages, or achieving those levels in a government-funded language program (Government of Canada, 2024). For this reason, many LINC students enrol in LINC classes in order to receive the necessary documentation to apply for citizenship.

Additionally, in order to become a Canadian citizen, one must pass a citizenship test and informal interview with a citizenship officer (Government of Canada, 2024). The test is based on a study guide entitled, *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship* (2011) provided by the federal government. The most current study guide was redesigned to contain more content and a requirement for higher language proficiency than its past editions. This was in response to the federal government's belief that the previous guide was too easy (Beeby, 2010). Previous versions used more basic language and simpler details. There has been a lot of controversy about the contents of the most recent study guide and its language level. Derwing (2017) suggests that it has been assessed as a 12.4 reading level according to a reputable readability test called the Flesch-Kincaid readability test. This is an extremely high reading level and for example, reads much higher than a Harry Potter novel (Readable, 2021). Derwing further stresses that in some sections of the study guide, it was evaluated at a much higher level than a CLB 4. This does not align with the speaking and listening minimum requirements required to provide proof of when applying.

High proficiency language levels resonate with a Toronto Star article that notes testing failure rates for refugees has further dropped 25%, and in the family reunification category, rates have also fallen 19.6% since the most recent study guide was published (Keung, 2017). Furthermore, Keung, a reporter who specializes in immigrant issues, states that more women are

failing the citizenship test than men. Winter (2014) also affirms that failure rates have increased since the current study guide was circulated.

Although this chapter includes an exploration of the level of language proficiency needed for immigrants to acquire Canadian citizenship, there has yet to be academic research that highlights the impact this has in government-funded adult ESL programs. Additionally, many scholars have reviewed the ways in which citizenship is taught in classrooms (Burkholder & Filion, 2014; Fleming, 2003; Joshee & Derwing, 2005; Morgan & Fleming, 2009; Thomson & Derwing, 2004), but there is a gap in research in how proficiency levels and testing requirements affect ESL programming, and more importantly, the consequences this has on students who wish to obtain their Canadian citizenship as a means of integrating into Canadian society.

Problematizing Adult ESL Programming

Research has revealed that adult ESL programs can be inherently disempowering. Policy texts have been explored to better understand this problem.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of how inequalities are conveyed in adult ESL programs, Gibb (2008) examined a Canadian adult second language policy text, the *CLB*; a key text used in adult ESL programs, and an employment skills policy text, *Meeting the Challenge*. The development of both of these texts was funded by the federal government of Canada. The bridging of these texts was done because government agencies contended that immigrants account for all the labour force growth and there is a need for language skills evaluation in the workforce. The purpose of this initiative was to gain a better understanding of how to assist immigrants with career success. Gibb asserts that through their critical discourse analysis, traces of human capital theory are evident in these documents. This theory suggests that those who invest in education will obtain value for their knowledge and skills, which consequently, will be

monetarily compensated. Gibb provides examples of how these government-funded texts unfairly imply immigrants can unrestrictedly determine their own career path in life. They refer to Mojab (2006), who asserts that this form of articulation "blames the individual and lets power structures off the hook" (p. 326). It appears creating unrealistic expectations and assigning fault on newcomers is projected in government-funded texts. Unfortunately, these discrepancies are overlooked in government texts and significantly impacts immigrants and educators who are required to use these texts.

Another federal policy that impacts ESL programming relates to student attendance and funding support. Policies and contribution agreements expect government-funded programs to adhere strict attendance protocols. These expectations are laid out in a government-funded manual (Bettencourt et al, 2003) intended for LINC providers as a guide to manage and administer LINC programming. In this document, attendance is articulated with the following:

- Students are shown that their poor attendance is recorded in a computer system.
- Providers are encouraged to prioritize public transportation support to students with 'good' attendance.
- Providers are encouraged to share monthly 'perfect attendance' awards and other methods to show good attendance.
- Attendance policies should require a doctor's note with longer absences.

These guidelines show the importance of attendance in LINC programs and indicate coercive methods. Students are required to adhere to the attendance expectations mentioned above, failure to do so may lead to expulsion, and consequently, they may experience feelings of shame and embarrassment. From my understanding, most LINC policies enforce 70 or 80% attendance.

Government policies lack considerations to some of the key challenges that newcomers have when adhering to attendance policies. There is limited research that speaks to this challenge. Frye (1999) proposes more flexible ESL programming for those who face some of the barriers that are part of current LINC and other settlement programs. Their class of all-women, a student directed curriculum, child-friendly atmosphere, and omission of attendance policies demonstrates how particular spaces can foster positive and empowering experiences. Fleming (2007) notes how LINC practitioners have often cited high dropout rates and low attendance, which coincides with the closing of many LINC classes in recent years. Funding cuts in LINC have been explained by the federal government as lacking ‘value’ for the money spent on these programs (Keung, 2012a). This idea refers back to Gibb’s (2008) discussion on human capital theory whereby students’ participation in these programs are monetarily valued. In fact, the Government of Canada’s (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2010) most recent evaluation of LINC ascribes a precise value of \$3150 per student. My review of literature suggests that attendance expectations in LINC are reflected in government-funded texts, and when attendance is ‘good,’ money is well spent.

Another consideration for the lack of empowerment in adult ESL programs is discussed in Currie and Cray’s (2004) article, *ESL literacy: language practice or social practice?*, which questions the literacy practices in LINC classes. Their research leads them to conclude that in writing, in particular, there is a common gap between what learners learn in the classroom, and their social needs. The authors assert, "Teachers favored traditional approaches to the teaching of writing, given that they have experience with such approaches and there is little in the LINC policy that militates against such an approach" (p. 125). As a result, learners are taught literacy skills that do not allow them to effectively communicate. This study illuminates the need for

more critical teacher training and curriculum development in order to provide language training that adequately supports the social needs of learners.

Language learning in and of itself is shaped by many factors including political influences, societal expectations, and governmental agendas. Similar struggles are faced in other realms like women in the workplace and LGBT legal rights with their partners. It is important to consider the “hidden agenda” of program policies and documents that may or may not be overt. Burnaby (2003) observes that citizenship and workforce preparation are key components of government-funded adult ESL programs, and the literature suggests that there is concern for passivity, disempowerment, and powerlessness amongst newcomers who access these programs. The next section reviews the approach of critical pedagogy, which is the guiding principle of my research.

Critical Pedagogy

Foundations

This section comprehensively examines the fascination surrounding critical pedagogy, with particular emphasis on its main principles. Notably, my foundational understanding of these principles, as articulated by Giroux (2020), took root in Freire’s (1970) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The influence of Freire's classic text played a pivotal role in shaping my conceptual framework of critical pedagogy. As I proceed with the detailed exploration of its principles in subsequent sections, it is imperative to recognize the historical underpinnings and enduring impact of Freire's insights on the trajectory of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy emerged from critical theory to the field of education. The underlying objectives of critical theory are grounded in critical pedagogy and are present in many other fields and disciplines. Critical theory was developed leading up to the repercussions of World

War II and was the result of the many movements that were taking place because of the high degrees of social unrest at the time (Thompson, 2017). This theory shifted the understanding of knowledge by subjectively questioning knowledge, or rather, critiquing it based within people's experiences of knowing.

Prior to the development of critical theory, knowledge was not critiqued in the same manner as there was a positivistic view on knowledge, which could not adequately explain power dynamics in social, political, and economic systems (Thompson, 2017). The foundation of critical theory was influenced by Marxist theory, yet Marx's theory was based solely on economic relations and failed to capture the complexities of socioeconomic systems (Bohman, 2003). In turn, critical theory offered a way to present inequalities in a more comprehensive manner. Critical theory provides a more informed awareness on how different groups of people are affected by broader constructions of social, political, and economic systems.

Critical pedagogy (CP) is an approach to teaching that stems from critical theory and was founded by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory in Frankfurt, Germany (Darder et al., 2009). The Frankfurt school was developed in response to the political struggles in Germany and was grounded in Marxist theory (Darder et al., 2009). The foundation of critical work was to consider the impact that political struggles had in how institutions like education was delivered. These foundations of critical theory still hold true today, and political landscapes continue to influence the cause.

Critical theory is a staple of CP and other critical branches including critical literacy, critical applied linguistics, critical language awareness, critical discourse analysis, and critical reflection. The authors cited in the above paragraph (Darder et al., 2009) note that the underlying goal of CP was to "give some shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape of radical

principles, beliefs, and practices that contributed to an emancipatory idea of democratic schooling in the United States during the twentieth century” (p. 2). Critical theories and more specifically, critical pedagogy tends to become visible during times of political controversy and in the context of revolutionary Marxist thought.

Darder et al. (2009) credit the first use of critical pedagogy in text to Henry Giroux's book, *Theory and Resistance in Education* in which he insisted on "link[ing] practices of schooling to democratic principles of society and transformative social action in the interest of oppressed communities” (cited in Darder et al., 2009, p. 2). During these times, it is no doubt many scholars had developed critical pedagogical practices, but Giroux's publication gave it its name. There are many others who engaged in CP practices and theories as discussed below. In a recent talk, Giroux (2020) points out that educational institutions have always taken on a “colonizational logic” whereby knowledge is developed and/or taught to maintain imbalances of power. They further note the current capitalistic market is the basis of education reform or more importantly, lack thereof. As a result, there is a “logic of profit” notion that integrates in all aspects of institutions; including education (and for the purpose of this paper; education in ESL programming). Critical pedagogy was established to learn and perhaps more importantly, unlearn how the imbalance of power is sustained and as will be discussed further, to advocate for transformation in order to neutralize power dynamics with various stakeholders. Critical is reflected in many contexts, but they are all related to scrutinizing relations of power. Critical theory is a broader notion and abstractly articulates power discourses whereas critical pedagogy "is directly concerned with social action and educational change" (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 31).

Gramsci (2010) provides valuable insights into the dynamics of power and balance, particularly through their concept of hegemony. In critical pedagogy, Gramsci's foundational theoretical concept of hegemony underpins the explanation of how dominant groups maintain and naturalize social control, accepted by society as a whole, rather than framing the imbalance of power as artificially created. Their ideas highlight the fact that power is not always physically forced upon or overt, yet it can be obtained subtly in cultural practices that reinforce the status quo. This understanding is expressed in Kumaravadivelu's work (2016) in which they discuss how native speakers of English are viewed as optimal transmitters of language acquisition and those who are not are depicted as "subaltern" professionals (p. 76) In this work, hegemonic social constructs prioritize native speakers of English over all other varieties of English.

Another way to consider the impact of hegemonic ordering is Bourdieu's (1991) work and their theoretical construct *cultural capital*. This is a key concept that has influenced the CP movement. This refers to the cultural upbringing, knowledge, outlook, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another. Cultural capital is exemplified in McLaren's (2016) work when they discuss cultural traits exhibited by students such as tardiness and types of gesturing and speaking. One who is familiar with the culture and has internalized certain behaviours as being appropriate will know that in a Canadian educational setting, for example, students are expected to come to class on time and speak in turn. Those who do not may face some form of discipline. Delpit (2006) provides an example where children were asked to share a story to which the white children told topic-centered ones, which focused on one event whereas black children in her study told "episodic" ones in which the story jumped around and was typically longer. The white adult participants who heard the stories found the black children's stories as difficult to follow and forecasted a dire future for those children whereas the black adult

participants had a different reaction all together. They viewed them as well formed and easy to follow. This illustration provides consideration on how teachers understand different behaviours in the classroom and subsequently, whose behaviours project positive and/or negative characteristics within educators.

Freire

Influenced by the poverty conditions they grew up in, Paulo Freire developed a pedagogy seeking to transform and empower, which is now known as critical pedagogy. Freire's work in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) offers a variety of theoretical frameworks to understand and affect change. Freire's ideas on education were greatly influenced by Dewey's work (Shor et al., 2009). Dewey's theoretical influences on Freire included the understanding that education needs to be a space "to advance students' ability to understand, articulate, and act democratically in the social experience" (p. 296). Freire is considered one of the leading proponents of critical pedagogy. Their work, ideas and practices have significantly shaped and guided many of those involved in the CP movement. Giroux (2020), who was mentioned above, credits their aspiration in the critical pedagogical movement to stem from Paulo Freire's ground-breaking book entitled, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). As Giroux has stated often, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* allowed them to contextualize their ideas of critical pedagogy and guide them in their ideas of creating empowering classrooms. Freire's work has created many key concepts in CP that have been widely explored and developed over the years. These concepts include: limit situations, banking education, problem posing, praxis, and conscientização, and each is reviewed in greater detail below.

Limit Situations

Critical pedagogical practices ultimately aim to empower learners and provide them with a fair chance in society. Freire (1970) extends this understanding with his term, “limit situations”. What they meant by this is that students should have an awareness of how their personal situations restrict them from achieving certain things. Simon (1992) also discusses how important it is to advocate for students to imagine new “horizons of possibility” by which they can act to achieve more than how their situations have limited them. In an adult ESL setting, the intention is to offer immigrants an equal chance to succeed in their new country and provide them with ways to prosper. One way this can be achieved is by recognizing the impact immigrant status and language limitations of the local language have on individuals who attend LINC programs. Awareness of barriers and limitations can be empowering for students. When students have opportunities to explore their ‘limit situations,’ they have more opportunities to make decisions that can affect their lives.

Banking Education

Freire’s well-known ‘banking concept of education’ theorizes an approach to education that mirrors a “transmission-style teaching” whereby “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). In other words, in this model of education, teachers are the all-knowing essence of information and administer crucial information to their willing and grateful subjects. Knowledge in the banking model is not collaboratively created in this model, but rather commanded one-directionally by an authoritative figure. Like a bank, knowledge is deposited in the minds of students without questioning. In contrast, Freire and many other critical thinkers hope educators

can become "problem posers" in their practices and explore how and what they teach because by doing so, they can come to understand how their practices perpetuate oppression.

Problem-Posing

Problem posing is in some ways, a direct contrast to the notion of banking education. Freire (1970) indicated that unlike the banking model, problem posing avoids students from being “docile listeners” (p. 81). Rather, this approach allows both the educator and the student to collectively create or be informed about knowledge. There is a space for equal sharing and contribution to the learning process. In addition, Freire indicates in this theory (what we now call critical pedagogy), the objective is to liberate individuals from oppressive conditions. Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) developed a key resource on problem-posing entitled, “Problem Posing at Work: Popular Educator’s Guide”. They discuss the use of creating educational spaces whereby dialogue is mutually encouraged by all participants in the experience, including students, teachers, and administrators. Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) state that, “problem-posing is a group process that draws on personal experience to create social connectedness and mutual responsibility for change” (p. 8). In this approach, knowledge is mutually shared, and topics presented in class aim to directly relate to the reality in students’ lives. This form of curricula is spearheaded collectively; not derived by teacher/administrator only. In addition, considerations to historical, political, and social contexts help inform the curriculum. ESL students can gain substantial advantages through a problem-posing approach. This is because the learning and teaching context can be tailored directly to address the unique challenges and circumstances faced by each student. Moreover, this approach helps to prevent the subtle dissemination of disempowering covert agendas or the reinforcement of status quo political platforms commonly present in mainstream adult ESL programming.

Praxis

Praxis is another seminal term in Freire's work and entails "the site where theory and practice come together to create action that leads to social and political change" (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 31). "Praxis" in teaching, is defined by Freire (1970) as "the reflection and action which truly transform reality, [and are] the source of knowledge and creation" (p. 100-101). Freire posits that unlike animals, which are biologically instinctive and automatic, human beings are capable of changing their life circumstances by reflecting on actions and, as a result, bringing about change. Thus, transforming the world by taking thoughtful action is a key tenet in CP. Dewey's work has heavily influenced Freire's development of praxis because they stressed the need for experience-based reflection. Dewey is noted as saying, "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory" (Dewey, as cited in Shor et al., 2009, p. 293). In an adult ESL setting, reflecting on one's circumstances can assist in advocating for empowering change. It provides opportunity to shed new light on institutions, program policies, teaching approaches, and textbook materials that may have disempowering attributes.

Conscientização

Dialogue is another key feature in Freire's notion of CP (Freire, 1970). Freire asserts that it is one's "primordial right to speak their word" (p. 88) and strongly advocates for discussion that leads to understanding how people are situated in relations of power. Freire maintains that "conscientização" (a Portuguese term) develops out of engaging in dialogue. This is also known in English as 'critical social consciousness' (Shor, 2009). The process of engaging in conscientização aids in the understanding and compassion for each other. Furthermore, this concept refers to developing a deeper understanding of the social, political, and economic discourses and without it, risks the maintenance of oppressive conditions. Engaging in dialogue

is a valuable way to gain deeper understanding of unknowingly disempowering practices and would be beneficial to practice in adult ESL classrooms. With these terms in mind, I have attempted to approach my classroom using the concepts articulated by Freire and developed further by other like-minded educators. The core ideologies expressed by Freire in their groundbreaking book, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” have inspired many educators in the critical pedagogical movement. Next, I discuss how CP has been practiced specifically in adult ESL programming and review the main challenges and considerations of using this approach.

CP in ESL

This section explores the literature that reviews the infusion of critical pedagogy into adult ESL programming and further highlights how it has been problematized and implemented as an approach to situate learning for these types of programs.

Although CP demonstrated development in the late 1970s, it did not trickle into second language education until around the late 1980s and early 1990s (Canagarajah, 2005; Crookes, 2013). There was a shift to view language instruction as seemingly innocent instruction, which was based on a structuralist perspective (the notion of teaching language as value-free) to an understanding that teaching is a political act and in that, power structures of inequality are perpetuated (Canagarajah, 2005). As cited in Pennycook (2001), McLaren (2016) discusses how formal education "always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimation of particular forms of social life" (p. 130). Thus, all elements of educational discourse such as text, ideas, and teaching practices are notably regarded in CP as neither neutral nor objective (Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

Critical Pedagogy gradually trickled into the domains of applied linguistics and ESL under the umbrella term "participatory education." In their 2001 work, "Participatory Practices in

Adult Education," Campbell and Burnaby (2001) discern Freire's contributions as popular education. They argue that, despite sharing fundamental principles, participatory education is uniquely situated within the North American context. In the same thread, the authors suggest that: "Participatory and critical pedagogy are similar, for both believing that naming the power dynamics within educational settings will act as a catalyst to begin addressing the power dynamic outside of the educational environment" (p. 3). In any case, the term participatory education is no longer used today as most literature uses the terminology, 'critical pedagogy;' however, Hawkins (2011) attempts to distinguish critical pedagogy from yet another term, 'social justice teacher education':

While 'critical' language teacher education puts the focus squarely on societal inequities often based on difference vis-a-vis race, class, gender, language, dis/ability and ethnicity and calls for educators (and indeed everybody) to understand how positioning within those categories leads to inequitable distribution of goods and resources, including education, a social justice turn highlights teachers' responsibility to serve as agents of social change (p. 2).

It is important to consider, however, in contrast to Hawkins' assertion, critical language teacher education (CLTE) need not be distinguished from social justice teacher education (SJTE). The terms are synonymous as CLTE is tantamount to CP and the main goal of CP bears parallel characterizations to SJTE as noted by Canagarajah (2005): "Critical students and teachers are prepared to situate learning in the relevant social contexts, unravel the implications of power in pedagogical activity, and commit themselves to transforming the means and ends of learning, in order to construct more egalitarian, equitable, and ethical educational and social environments" (p. 932). It is the above definition provided by Canagarajah that guides me in my

understanding of CP. I believe that this quote encapsulates all the foundational principles of critical pedagogy and can serve as a basic ideological framework to not only the roles teachers have in the learning process, but learners as well.

Another term that has been adopted throughout this thesis to reflect critical pedagogical approaches is *criticality*. Criticality implies processes that encompass critical reflection with the aim to transform socially situated spaces (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2016). Critical pedagogy and criticality share a common objective: to facilitate opportunities for transformative change through a combination of reflection and action. This framework has recently started to make its way in community-based ESL learning.

Sauvé's (1987) work is one of the first contributions to CP in adult ESL education (Campbell & Burnaby, 2001). Their work was embedded in Freirean theory with a strong focus on praxis. Their book entitled, *From One Educator to Another: A Window on Participatory Education* received enough acknowledgement to enable them to write another book: *Issues, Challenges and Alternatives in Teaching Adult ESL*. In their latter book, Sauvé (2000) paves the way for separating traditional approaches to adult ESL teaching from participatory education. For example, they address how language in participatory education is viewed as a medium of communication, which creates knowledge and human experiences whereas "delivery-based" approaches see language as an objective tool used to communicate with.

Branching out of traditional teaching practices is furthered in Auerbach's 1992 work entitled, *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy*. They question teachers' roles and approaches by comparing an ends-means approach to a participatory one. An ends-means approach is similar to Freire's banking concept of education whereby a teacher's role is to transmit knowledge, reducing students to blind

receivers of that information. Auerbach's work is still influential today in one of their last publications along with Wallerstein, which focuses on problem posing in the workplace (Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004).

Current influences of CP in adult ESL are in abundance. Many language educators today have various elements of critical approaches in their work. Norton's (2014) work has incorporated feminist poststructuralism in the field of adult ESL and coined the term *investment* in replacement of motivation, which fails to portray the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2016; Norton Peirce, 1995). By problematizing the notion of motivation as a fixed personality trait, space is made to understand power dynamics and the complex identities language learners have which influence their desire to learn.

Other feminists have embraced critical elements as well. bell hooks (2010) provides feminist considerations to critical thinking in their teaching trilogy entitled *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. Steeped in Freirean thought, hooks provokes readers to look at pedagogical encounters from a critical perspective. They maintain that "thinking is an action" (p. 7) and advocates for new kinds of thinking that empower oppressed races, classes, and sexes. Growing up as a Black female has significantly influenced their perspective and their examples of oppressive conditions in their work. Earlier work (mainly Freire) had focused on class-based oppression, yet hooks' work has highlighted other considerations like race and gender.

Benesch's (2001) discussion of feminist pedagogy also offers ways to refine CP. Their work stems from researching critical English for academic purposes. They highlight the efforts feminists have made to expand and re-read CP in light of other subject positions. They draw on Weiler (1994) and their criticism on Freire and their "tendency to universalize experience,

knowledge, and truth and his optimistic portrait of teacher authority as dialogic and benign" (Benesch, 2001, p.57). Although Freire's research and work was enlightening at the time, current scholars have added valuable insights to expand the foundational work in CP and these considerations continue today. CP is not a static concept and as the literature reveals, continues to evolve by undertaking new considerations.

In their study, Breuing (2011) attempts to find a consistent and concrete definition of what critical pedagogy is. They conduct a qualitative research project on 17 self-identified critical pedagogues and discover that there is a lot of controversy on what critical pedagogy is. Furthermore, their findings also speculate on who can take credit for this movement. They point out that in the literature, there is a failure to acknowledge the work done by feminists and anti-racist advocates in the scope of CP and questions the "founding fathers" (such as Freire and theorists from the Frankfurt School) of critical pedagogy. In this context, it is crucial to avoid constraining CP or any of its variants within a singular, fixed definition. Instead, it is advisable to allow the term to intersect with branches of critical theory, fostering a nuanced understanding and steering clear of reductionist perspectives.

There is a long-standing debate on what CP is. Is it an approach? Is it a methodology? Canagarajah (2005) defines CP as a way of "doing" learning and teaching. In the same thread, Pennycook (2001) calls it an "attitude". In both cases, it is important to recognize that CP is not simply something an educator can pick and choose in their class, but a disposition they can bring to the table. I do not believe teacher training programs that prepare new teachers to the field of adult ESL in North America "do" CP in their training, but rather introduce it as supplement or totally ignore it. In my job as a LINC teacher, I have hosted many student teachers to complete their practicum over the past few years, and in their lesson planning, discussion, and approaches,

not one has ever mentioned *doing* critical pedagogy. Hawkins (2011) supports this claim and discusses a 14-week methods course they taught that gave little merit to CP. They assert, "Critical approaches and social justice work were add-ons, not central to the curriculum and the work teachers do; they were treated as a separate domain from culturally and linguistically responsive practice and treated as a 1-week topic" (p. 108). Regrettably, the lack of including CP in teacher training courses (or reducing it to a small chapter) and/or 'doing' it in class has devalued the importance of it.

Problematizing Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy as an empowering practice has evolved from particular social, political, cultural, and historical conditions (Breunig, 2011). During its development (and as it continues to develop), other considerations have impacted how it is regarded. In North America, it is primarily practiced in English. Canagarajah (2005) observes that it seems somewhat paradoxical that forms of resistance provoked in CP are taught in the language of colonizers. As such, there is significant value in applying CP in ESL classrooms, but nevertheless, this approach is a site for controversy for some. The underlying aim in CP is to seek to empower and challenge oppressive conditions and in this particular context, the lives of adult ESL immigrants in North America (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Those inspired by critical approaches to education pay attention to the relationships between language learning and social change (Norton & Toohey, 2004). There is no wavering to acknowledge that language is a political act as noted by Freire (1970) who grounds the CP movement. Norton and Toohey (2004) expand on this meaning: "language is not simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for their future (p. 1). The next section

explores the reasons for, and sources of resistance to critical pedagogies with a specific focus on North American adult ESL.

In their book, *Problem-Posing at Work: Popular Educator's Guide*, Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) are informed by Freire's (1970) work and offer a problem posing approach to educational practices in a North American adult ESL context. According to the authors, this approach assumes that education is not value-free but rather, discursively embedded in a social context. Inspiring a continual cycle of reflection and action is how problem-posing is facilitated. In Freirean terms, this is also called "praxis". Wallerstein and Auerbach's application of this approach includes a stage of listening with learners, then dialogue, and finally action. The purpose is to understand issues or concerns, critically discuss, and act to change them. However, there are five main criticisms that the authors discuss about this approach in their book. They note them as "myths" (p. 21) and suggest that these criticisms/myths are grounded in misinterpretations of problem-posing Freirean education. The authors outline each criticism and convey how their interpretation better reflects Freire's philosophies. It is important to point out these criticisms because different ideas of what critical pedagogy is and how it is enacted has been a source for ambiguity and misunderstanding and this will be expanded on forthcoming.

The first criticism is that Freirean education is too learner-centered and basically students are free to do whatever they want to do. The notion here is that teachers become "liquidated" (p. 21). Although Freire sees teachers as co-learners, Auerbach and Wallerstein argue that this does not eliminate their job to direct, coordinate, and expand the learning experience beyond neutral facilitation. The process of listening, dialoguing, and exploring action is also a learning activity for teachers who can gain a better understanding of the difficulties their students face; however, the role of directing that process is still vital. The authors also note that within co-learning,

teachers should not ignore the immense power they have in terms of things like giving grades, directing the curriculum, and accepting certain behaviours in the class.

The next criticism Wallerstein and Auerbach counter is that Freirean education is too political. The myth that they highlight in this criticism is that education itself is a political act and thus, all educational practices, whether done explicitly or implicitly, are politically driven. The main difference from a critical pedagogical perspective is that educators acknowledge this aspect in education and make this explicit.

Thirdly, the authors point out that critiques to problem-posing education suggest that this framework focuses too much on problems and is a very pessimistic approach. Furthermore, teachers are expected to act like therapists or social workers, and students may want to come to class to escape the problems they have outside the classroom. The authors point out that the task of problem-posing is not to solve everyone's life challenges, but rather illuminate the common struggles individuals have. They do however suggest that in some cases, perhaps employing the aid of social workers and or psychologists may be beneficial to learning situations.

Freire's work is centered on their personal experience of growing up in poverty in Brazil. As a result, their focus was on economic and class-based inequalities. This is the fourth criticism, which Wallerstein and Auerbach bring up in their work; critics claim that Freirean approaches are out-dated and fail to capture the complexity of social realities outside of class-based conditions. This is true; however, theories such as feminist, post-colonial, critical race, and queer theory have expanded Freirean literature and CP. Examples of this includes literature that has re-embraced the notion of social class as a consideration for power and privilege (Kanno & Vandrick (2014); Morgan & Ramanathan (2009). Thus, rather than 'throwing out the baby with the bath water', educators can modify this approach to be more inclusive of different forms of

oppression such as discrimination of sexual, racial, and minorities. Feminists in particular have expanded notions of CP, which they claim have traditionally been rooted in masculine universalistic constructions (Benesch, 2001). They call for the scrutiny of multiple identities and expand Freire's class-based oppression to include categories of race, gender, ethnicity, and other subject positions. Weiler (1994) and Gore (1992) have called for "taking societal and institutional limitations into account along with greater attention to multiple identities being negotiated in a single classroom with a particular group of students" (as cited in Benesch, 2001, p. 60).

The last critique that Wallerstein and Auerbach raised in their work is echoed elsewhere in CP literature, which points out that Freirean education is a method and as such, limited to a linear and static procedure. This is misleading and addressed by Canagarajah (2005), who maintains that "it is difficult to define critical pedagogy in our field according to a static body of ideas or a limited set of philosophical axioms" (p. 932). They define CP in a practice-oriented manner, making space for diverse ways of illuminating power structures in educational settings and warns of the danger of placing it in the category of method. As a result, there are many ways to "do" CP. Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) offer a few different models of problem-posing in their book and factor in situational circumstances that may or may not adhere to a standard model.

Aside from the criticisms mentioned in Wallerstein and Auerbach's (2004) book, there have been a few more reasons to explain why CP has not prospered in adult ESL settings. One consideration to explore is the belief that it is tied to a rationalistic view (Pennycook, 2001). The assumption here is that in the process of doing/applying CP, students become logically and simplistically aware of their oppressive situation(s) and fail to see the complex discourses

surrounding those issues. There is also the threat of modernist notions of CP, which universalize oppression in a one-size-fits-all category. Educators have since advocated for situated approaches to CP and the absence of prescriptive models in order to foster empowering teaching practices (Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

The language used in CP has been also a source of avoidance for practitioners. The claim here is that due to the sophisticated wording and theorizing of CP, power and privilege get re-inscribed (Shor, 2009). This point is worth noting because the term critical pedagogy itself may evoke a sense of complexity. Based on my personal experience using the term over the last twelve years, I have found that it often necessitates a detailed explanation for those who have not studied this approach. Rather, Hawkins' (2011) use of social justice teacher education in lieu of critical language teacher education may be more suitable because the terminology is easier to understand across a range of disciplines and is more teacher-focused. In addition, Pennycook's (2004) problematizing practice concept is worth considering too because it addresses how one may universally articulate the idea of critical pedagogy and its practices. What Pennycook means by this is that terms like 'critical pedagogy' need to be continuously updated and defined in order to consider locally situated contexts, understandings, and current theoretical underpinnings.

A relatively unpopular argument opposing CP is made by Johnston (2002) who has a "high regard" (p. 61) for CP but claims not to practice it. Johnston's work is concerned with how teachers project values in English language teaching. Although they commend CP approaches for providing awareness on political significance and their anchoring in values, they question the personal values that critical practitioners present in classrooms. What Johnston fails to recognize, however, is that the focus CP educators have is not simply personal values, but the goal to raise

social imbalances of power and explore one's positioning in them (Freire, 1970, Canagarajah, 2005).

Postmodern ideology is yet another restriction to CP practices. Postmodern theories have "sought to move away from all-consuming meta-narratives, rejecting traditional notions of totality, reason and universality of absolute knowledge" (Darder et al., 2009, p. 16). As a result, the fragmentation and understanding of the multitude of practices in CP prevent it from forming a common ground. Crookes (2009) attends to this point, suggesting that the diversity in language learning may be the reason for a lack of unity. They frame this in the context of multifaceted sites of CP including ESL, EFL, adult, elementary, and third world schooling. The lack of uniformity may at first seem chaotic, but in the context of adult ESL in North America, common themes and threads can easily permeate in language instruction institutions given the space.

Neoliberalism

The neoliberal agenda is a significant barrier to implementing a critical approach to teaching. In this mindset, neoliberal thinkers focus on economic rationality and justify dominant norms, which tends to maximize their own personal benefits (Apple, 2011, p. 59). Hawkins (2011) maintains that neoliberalism is "underpinned by an objectivist view, which sees language as a transparent and neutral medium for reflecting a pre-given reality and communicating thought" (p. 66). The theory of neoliberalism contradicts the spirit of critical pedagogy because in a neoliberal view, language learning is perceived to be non-partial and objective whereas from a CP perspective, language learning is quite subjective and biased. Clarke and Morgan (2011) also discuss the difficulty of implementing CP when there is "a reform agenda intent on achieving greater efficiencies, accountability and competitiveness in program delivery" (p. 65). The implications of present notions of language being empirical and non-subjective obscures the

sociality of language and its implications of particular power dynamics. Neoliberal notions of language do not consider the active role language plays in making sense of the world and the powerful discourses that are embedded in it. It makes language appear to be apolitical, which counters the core belief in CP; that language is a political act (Freire, 1970).

Under the guise of being "efficient", the neoliberal agenda envisions students not as empowering learners (as the thrusting force in critical pedagogical practices), but as human capital. The end goal is to shape language learners as economic consumers, and this is evident in all aspects of government-funded adult ESL classrooms in Canada. As Fleming (2007) outlines a key expectation in these programs is job preparation, but limited funding, eligibility conditions, and personal circumstances result in recipients of these programs receiving basic levels of proficiency, which in turn, limits their opportunities to gain prosperous employment. Fleming also notes that these conditions are further complicated because programs tend to construct non-egalitarian identities amongst those who take part in them. Gibb (2008) similarly contends that the implications limited funding and employment-driven ESL programming is disastrous for the immigrants who fail to fit into an ideology supported by government documentation and policies that unfairly offer hope and empowerment.

In the neoliberal framework, education is viewed as a product to be marketed. It envisions education as a commodity and encourages the learning process to be efficient, employable, and adopting the status quo. This ideology trickles through in many aspects of the learning and teaching experience. Although Freire (1970) notes that education is a political forum and bears the implications of political decisions, the notion of neoliberalism manifests into this concept as well, adding another barrier of developing critical pedagogical approaches in the classroom. A Toronto Star article reported that when the right-wing Conservative government

took power after the left-wing Liberal Party was defeated in 2006, settlement programs were cut by \$52 million in 2012 and \$9 million in research grants were also cut (Keung, 2012a). As this article highlights, funding decisions are politically driven and influenced by a neoliberal perspective. The belief of redefining education for job preparation (a characteristic of the neoliberal agenda) was powerfully echoed by former Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney (The Agenda with Steve Paikin, 2012) when they stated, “I strongly believe that economic integration is the best path to social integration. If new Canadians can maximize their contribution to the labour market, social integration will quickly follow” (Keung, 2012b). Ironically, this was reported days after settlement and research on immigration cuts were announced. What is missing from Kenney's assertion is articulated in Clarke and Morgan's (2011) discussion on the systemic barriers that prevent newcomers from finding good jobs. The authors point out that the onus is put solely on newcomers to gain the language necessary to be marketable. Current ESL curricula engages in neoliberal ideology as noted by Clarke and Morgan (2011):

What is remarkable and consistent in these documents [LINC curricula & the CLB] is the discursive construction of language as the sole obstacle/barrier to participation in the economy and social mobility - hence an obstacle for which newcomers/learners and language providers are held primarily responsible. (p. 76)

The authors call for a greater awareness on the social and political role language plays in society as well as the broader structures that hinder the life chances of newcomers.

Neoliberalism drives emotions and negatively affects the life chances of newcomers as reported in Benesch's (2012) book, *Considering Emotions in Critical English Language Teaching*. Their work examines the relationship between emotions and criticality in ELT and

provides another layer of understanding by showing how emotions affect teaching and learning. Benesch argues how it is important for teachers to pay more attention to "bad" or "ugly" feelings in themselves and their students rather than trying to repress them. They relate this to an example of how there is an assumption that immigrants should be indebted for their migration to an immigrant-receiving country and those with "sour dispositions" are regarded as being ungrateful (p. 127). As a result, teachers buy into this "happy migrant phenomenon" and cajole students by telling them they are lucky and to keep their chin up. Benesch makes an effective argument that offers the possibility of this type of encouragement (or "cheerleading" as they call it) as a consequence of neoliberal cutbacks. Their rationale points to the need for teachers to adhere to "emotional labour" which imposes to ensure the happiness of their students at the risk of being fired for having an unhappy class (p. 217). The consequence of the push to produce happy classes is that it thwarts critical teaching, according to Benesch. They maintain that classroom space should be a place that fosters and critically explores the "ugly" feelings some students may have in order to better understand their situations and challenges (p. 127). This process legitimates ugly feelings and paves the way for critical learning.

Another concept Benesch (2012) discusses in their book is Ahmed's notion of "sticky objects" (p. 58), which are objects to which emotions adhere. This is exemplified in a study Benesch had done on dictionary use in the classroom. They ask their participants, who are a group of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students, about their opinion of the usefulness of dictionaries in the classroom. Benesch's interest is sparked by a couple of participants who believe that they are too "lazy" to use dictionaries. This surprises Benesch because "it belies their engagement in busy and complicated lives as young immigrants, including working, going to college, taking care of family members, and trying to manage the emotional complexity of it

call" (p. 63). After some discussion, they realized that time constraints in the flow of classrooms make the use of dictionaries quite frustrating since they have to look up the word, find the correct meaning to the context, and apply it in the context being used. As a teacher (with power), Benesch thought that dictionaries were "happy" objects for her students and like many teachers, instructed dictionary use in their classroom, but after some critical analysis on the emotions attached to dictionaries by students who use them, discovered that they are "unhappy" objects that trigger anxiety. This notion is echoed by the teachers in her study who also assumed that dictionaries were a wonderful resource in the classroom. Benesch's work helps to uncover how emotions play a vital role in the power dynamics of a classroom spaces.

The classic divide between theory and practice has not escaped professionals in this field. We all have had those moments (which I am sure my readers can attest to) where our well-thought-out lessons based on sophisticated theories did not go exactly as planned. Morgan (1998) discusses how their confidence was threatened and how they felt disrespected when students challenged their well-constructed lessons. These feelings (what Benesch (2012) has called "ugly") have probably been felt by all teachers at some point in their careers. It is only recently where resistance has been viewed as a site for critical engagement as noted in Benesch (2001). They maintain, "Moments when students resist institutional power are seen as opportunities to problematize power by discussing classroom architecture, the ratio of student to teacher talk, assignments, testing, and evaluation" (p.61). This is to say, one should not take personal challenges to heart, but rather look at sites of struggles as opportunities to explore greater issues.

The notion of how Freire's pedagogy is based on Western assumptions that consequently undermine other knowledge systems is another criticism of CP. Bowers and Apffel-Marglin (2005) edit a book focused on advocating for other ways of knowing, which they claim are

absent in Freirean theory. One argument made in this book is that intergenerational knowledge is unrecognized in Freirean theory, which contrastively focuses only on individual critical reflection. In the preface of the book, Bowers and Apffel-Marglin argue that the reliance on intergenerational knowledge is imperative to the sustainability of local ecologies. Although the points I have argued thus far defend CP practices, this is a criticism worth considering. Bowers and Apffel-Marglin make the claim that the Freirean emancipated individual will become more dependent on consumerism. They conceive this by suggesting that in the process of critical reflection (a key trait in CP), which subsequently overturns traditions weakens cultural diversity and intergenerational knowledge; both of which are necessary for sustaining biodiversity. This unintentional departure from nature within the practices of CP has been re-considered and re-evaluated by critical theorists. Current explorations regarding the ecological crisis are now being critically considered in The Paulo Freire Institute for Ecopedagogy, which is dedicated to "the construction of a planetary citizenship so that all, with no exception or exclusion, may have healthy conditions, in a planet able to offer life because its own life is preserved" (Darder et al., 2009, p. 18).

Robinson (2005) discusses how their travels into Cambodia armed with Freirean ideology failed. They attempted to sway their Buddhist students with their own Freirean notions of liberation and were met with extreme and tense resistance. This lesson taught them that there is more than one way of looking at understandings of concepts (in this case liberation). As mentioned before, Pennycook (2004) discusses the critical need to "cast doubt" on the assumptions of terms like liberation and as such, apply a *problematizing practice* to this term. In this regard, CP has developed to allow for other forms of knowledge/ ways of knowing to be considered, valued, and practiced in educational settings.

Modern criticisms have advanced the development of CP to include postmodern aspects. Giroux and McLaren are criticized for their "grand theorizing" by Gore as cited in Pennycook (2001). This element of modernity is also critiqued in Freire's work. Pennycook (2001) refers to Usher and Edwards, who presuppose that CP operates in "universalist discourses of modernism, a simplistic belief in the shared goals of democracy" (p.133). This type of theorizing suggests that emancipation is encompassed in a one-size-fits-all modernistic framework. It was also thought that early radical educators (who were frequently male) conceived themselves as the liberators of the oppressed via constructions of rationalist paternalistic Enlightenment discourses (Starfield, 2004). However, as Benesch (2001) maintains, in current times, the shift from who gives empowerment and/or liberation is clearly distinguished to how Gore has described the understanding of power and liberation as a Foucauldian notion of 'exercise'; it is not a commodity in which one can give and/or take away.

A distinct example of a post-modern CP is demonstrated in Morgan's (1998) work with adult ESL students in a high-intermediate class. Morgan introduces a text that depicts a Cantonese-speaking housewife in a seemingly traditional Chinese (and Canadian) role whereby her husband views the role of a wife to stay home, look after the children, and take care of their appearance. Consequently, this leaves the wife feeling isolated in a new country in which they do not speak the language. It would meet contemporary norms to idealize a solution for this housewife by way of defying her husband's beliefs and simply seeking the right to change their situation and in turn, encounter emancipation. Morgan, however, approached the lesson by considering various solutions and being mindful that there is more than one way to improve this woman's circumstance. The author was sensitive to the socio-cultural dynamics in which this woman's needs may be different than those framed by modernist western ideologies. This type of

example demonstrates how educators need to be mindful that perceptions of empowerment are culturally and locally situated.

Another study, which highlights post-modern CP is Benesch's (1999) work on injustice in relation to gay rights. They presented their EAP composition class an article about the brutal murder of a gay man named Matthew Shepard. The class discussed the event and expressed their opinions about it. Some expanded the discussion with personal encounters with gay issues. Benesch interjected a couple of times to offer them to think critically and ponder what assumptions underlie their beliefs. Their approach demonstrates the importance and acceptance of others' viewpoints by encouraging dialogue rather than being monologic. Although Benesch engaged critically with their students and provoked them to think differently about ways of understanding relationships, they did not fit their whole class into one universal concept that reaffirmed their viewpoint on same-sex relationships. This approach acknowledges the non-universal positioning of controversial issues and notions of equality.

In response to Benesch's above-mentioned work, Haque's (2007) article critiques the notion of voice and the idea of empowerment as it relates to criticality in their article, "Critical pedagogy in English for Academic Purposes and the possibility for 'tactics' of resistance". They explore the main tenets of critical pedagogy on the premise that the goal is emancipation, yet questions if the main premise of CP is sufficiently executed in teaching practices in a North American context where colonial mindsets dominate ideas of concepts like democracy and freedom. Haque questions if the critical discussions created in Benesch's class on the violence of male homophobia accounted for how the viewpoints shared inside the classroom would be received outside of the classroom. This is a key point to consider because as they state, "voices of subjugated and experimental knowledge are always embedded in power relations and the

expression of one ‘voice’ may well create imbalances that affect the prescribed student expression and dialogue” (p. 92). They propose a more viable means to combat inequalities in EAP education by what they call, ‘tactics’ of resistance. This involves taking advantage of opportunities as they arise in the classroom and manipulate the events in order to assist a more just situation. These methods tend to be encouraged on a micro scale and one example Haque provides is when an EAP teacher had called the Indian embassy to advocate that English is an official language and because of this, a particular Indian student would not need to take a language proficiency test. Haque acknowledges that this act did not create policy change but maintains that moments like this greatly support the critical pedagogical movement.

Morgan (2004b) also provides critical pedagogy-in-practice by demonstrating how creating identities can be constructed rather than be purely represented in the classroom. In their article, *Teacher identity as pedagogy: Towards a field-internal conceptualisation in bilingual and second language education*, students were provided the opportunity to develop their own understandings of a Canadian issue in a grammar lesson about modals which subsequently gave them the ability to express their own personal experiences on an issue in Hong Kong, their native country. From this example, Morgan was able to illustrate how classroom techniques critically shape the understanding of ideas. Morgan's (1998) work also highlights the need for expansion of research and study in CP for lower proficient language learners as the bulk of interest is geared towards higher levels.

Canagarajah (2005) points out that English is a colonial language and with that, complex relations of power exist above and beyond other educational settings. With this in mind, it is important to consider Luke and Dooley's (2011) call for renaming the world by decoding and recoding meaning; especially since power relations are grounded in colonial thinking. Another

criticism of CP has been that it is too abstract (Benesch, 2001), yet Morgan's (1998, 2004a) work helps to provide concrete examples of criticality in action. For example, another research of theirs focuses on how the Gulf War is written about in the media and how it can be critically examined. They presented an article from the Globe and Mail on the topic to discuss how language is structured to generate particular feelings. This task enabled students to critically think about what they read and demonstrate the non-neutrality in which journalists write. It also allowed them to critically reflect on language choices to convey particular ideas.

Another consideration that Pennycook (2010) discusses is "a renewal of thinking about language that moves away from the continuing emphasis on structure and system and instead embraces a notion of practice (p. 16.9). This steers away from traditional Marxist thinking, which was the framework from which CP was derived. Pennycook suggests that there should be a focus on everyday uses of language and practitioners need to deviate from linguistic theories that are limited by Western ideology. They highlight the importance of local language use and avoid "grand sweeping gestures of imperialism, language rights and globalization" (p.16.9). Hawkins and Norton (2009) also take up the local and specific importance of language learning as a catalyst for CP and "pedagogies of possibility" (Simon, 1987 as cited in Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 36).

Critical pedagogical approaches have enabled language learning to be seen as something that is not objective and positivistic, but rather a medium in which political and social acts are constructed. Scholarship in the field has highlighted the discourses of power that are imbedded in educational settings and provided situational examples on how to challenge them. As this literature has revealed, CP is a relatively new, and in some cases, problematic approach to

education in adult ESL programming, yet continues to evolve with new theoretical and empirical developments.

Reflective Practice

In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), reflective practice plays a central role in informing educators' understanding and implementation of critical pedagogy. Reflective practice allows educators to continuously evaluate their teaching strategies, providing them with a framework to critically examine power structures, societal norms, and their own teaching methods within the ELT context (Schön, 1992, Farrell, 2016). By engaging in reflective practice, teachers can effectively analyze and challenge oppressive systems, aligning their teaching approaches with the principles of critical pedagogy.

Being a reflective teacher is an important part of any education setting, including teachers in adult ESL programming. It is inherently integrated in action research and critical pedagogical approaches. The onset of reflective practice has proliferated in many professions, including adult ESL programming (Farrell, 2016).

To distinguish the beliefs that teachers have about what they are doing in the classroom from the actual actions that are being done, teachers must engage in reflective practice (Farrell, 2006). Reflective practice entails a cyclical process involving planning, reflection, and subsequent adjustment, unfolding gradually throughout a course design and implementation (Ding & Bruce, 2017).

Dewey's (1916; 1933) work laid the groundwork for contemporary discussions on critical reflective practice, experiential learning, and student-centered education. Their emphasis on the integration of theory and practice, active engagement with experiences, and the role of reflection in learning has influenced educators and scholars across diverse fields.

Reflective practice highlights the importance of examining the values and ethical considerations that shape professional actions in the classroom (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Accordingly, as a consideration in reflective practice, exploring one's beliefs and an awareness of how these beliefs influence decision-making and practice are vital components of the practice.

Schön (1983) made a significant contribution to the concept of reflective practice by emphasizing the importance of teachers engaging in continuous reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-practice to enhance their practice. Through this process, teachers can bridge the gap between theory and practice, reconciling what they know with what they implement in the classroom. Schön (1983) further argues that teachers often encounter complex, unpredictable situations that require real-time adaptation and innovation. Reflective practice involves critically examining these experiences, challenging assumptions, and integrating new insights into future actions, highlighting the dynamic and iterative nature of learning and professional development.

Kolb (1984) expands reflective practice and emphasizes the role of reflection in the experiential learning process. Their Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) outlines a cycle of learning that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This framework emphasizes the iterative nature of learning, where individuals engage in a continuous cycle of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing, and applying knowledge in practice.

Additionally, Farrell (2016) provides a framework to holistically capture elements of reflective practice. Their framework entails five different stages of reflection: philosophy; principles; theory; practice; and beyond practice. They are summarized below.

1. **Philosophy:** This stage explores the foundational beliefs and values that guide a teacher's practice, stemming from personal background, heritage, and upbringing.
2. **Principles:** Teachers probe into their underlying assumptions, beliefs, and overarching conceptions of teaching and learning, which inform their instructional decisions and practices.
3. **Theory:** Teachers reflect on the specific skills and approaches they employ in their teaching, considering both formal theories learned in education courses and informal theories developed through experience.
4. **Practice:** In this stage, teachers reflect on their observable teaching behaviors and student reactions, considering how their previous reflections on philosophy, principles, and theory manifest in classroom practice. Reflection occurs during teaching (reflection-in-action), after teaching (reflection-on-action), or before teaching (reflection-for-action).
5. **Beyond practice:** This final stage expands reflection to encompass broader sociocultural dimensions of teaching and learning. Critical reflection prompts teachers to examine moral, political, and social issues impacting their practice, linking classroom actions to wider sociopolitical contexts and moral values.

Farrell's (2016) framework allows for diverse navigation pathways, such as theory-into-practice, practice-into-theory, or focusing on a single stage. Descriptive in nature, it offers a nuanced understanding of reflection, emphasizing non-linearity and analytical differentiation, which contrasts with sequential and linear models of reflective practice.

In terms of criticality in reflective practice, Kumaravadivelu (1994; 2001) discusses the concept of reflective practice in their notion of "postmethod pedagogy" as an alternative to traditional teaching methods. In this approach, reflective practice involves critically examining

power dynamics, cultural influences, and institutional structures that shape language teaching. Kumaravadivelu (1994) further advocates for decolonizing the English language by encouraging teachers to critically reflect on how English is being taught in the classroom as it relates to dominant discourses.

Hence, Kumaravadivelu (2006) advocates for a critical perspective on reflective practice, emphasizing the importance of exploring the sociocultural and political dimensions of teaching and learning. They posit that reflection should extend beyond individual classroom experiences to consider broader social and institutional contexts, promoting transformative change in language education. This consideration on critical reflective practice mirror attributes of critical pedagogical approaches whereby teaching and learning are transformative acts (Canagarajah, 2005).

Recognizing the inherent connection between critical reflective practice, critical pedagogical approaches, and action research, the subsequent chapter will examine into the specifics of my research design and methodology, illuminating how these elements intersect in the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 outlines the guiding research question and sheds light on the reflective conditions that shaped the design of my action-oriented case study. It delves into the research methods adopted for this study and examines the research setting and participants. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of the collected data, comprising of field notes, classroom memorabilia, and a demographic survey, and discusses the process used to analyze the data thematically to produce findings. Discussions of ethical considerations, validity, and limitations of the study complete this chapter.

Research Question

The guiding research question is:

What are the experiences and reflective perspectives of an ESL teacher implementing a critical pedagogy approach within an LINC/ESL classroom for adults with low proficiency in English?

Philosophical Perspective

This research study is grounded in my own understandings and how I see the world, which are embedded in an evolutionary approach to social justice. This is articulated in the paradigms of ontology (what I believe is real) and epistemology (how I perceive reality) (Mason, 2014). In the interest of transparency, my foundational ontological and epistemological positions as the researcher are outlined in the following subsections.

Interpretivism

Similar to the action research stance, my ontological framework rejects the prospect of objective, singular truths and the positivist approach, which assumes research can be carried out free of bias (Ryan, 2018). Rather, “reality,” as a whole, is understood to be comprised of *distinct*,

individual realities constructed by an individual's experiences. This is understood as an *interpretivist* position, which assumes knowledge is constructed through value-laden interpretations (Leitch et al., 2010).

My epistemological standpoint considers the subjective nature of my and others' understandings of reality. This is influenced by people's experiences and cultures (Ryan, 2018). Knowledge is *socially constructed* by perceptions of realities. This is to say that how one individual perceives a situation may be different than another individual. The rich and detailed data offered by the case study approach appropriately represents participants' experiences in this respect. I have attempted to do this throughout the entire process, and this is not limited to the research process, but through interactions with participants as well.

Positionality

Traditional and historical criteria hold that positivism and objectivity are obtainable, but the action research approach rejects this assumption (Baum et al., 2006). Action research recognizes subjectivity will affect the research and acknowledges that the researcher's positionality will affect the outcome of *any* research. For this reason, it is important to share my positionality and how it ties to the research.

Positionality encompasses, "an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context" (Holmes, 2020). This subjectivity is carried throughout the whole process of conducting research and involves many layers based on categories such as gender, race, social class, and status. My identity as a white, middle-class, Canadian-born citizen undoubtedly influences how I see the world despite my efforts to understand others' worldviews and express them here in this research.

In this research study, the most important consideration regarding positionality involved the colonizer/colonized identities between the researcher (as a teacher, participant, and academic researcher) and student participants. The dynamics between me and student participants reflected colonizer/colonized positionalities a couple of ways; firstly, by way of the teacher/student relationship, which traditionally gives power and authority to the teacher and secondly; my white, Christian, Canadian-European identity that contrasted with a group of people who are composed of refugees and immigrants and predominately Black Muslims/non-Christian. This binary of difference was a key factor that was considered in this research. I drew on Freire's (1970) notion that I work *with* student participants, not *for* them. Together, we shared our knowledge and understandings. This was accomplished by using a variety of critical pedagogical strategies, which will be expanded on in further sections.

A critical postcolonial perspective also informed the methodological approach, with an aim to understand the persistent effects of the dichotomous colonizer/colonized relationship in an educational context. I was mindful of how social, cultural political, and economic landscapes have centered on European colonial rule, and the many ways it has shaped our classroom space. More importantly, acknowledging power differential amongst myself and student participants was important so that they could be dissolved (Besio & Butz, 2004).

Although this study involved different positionalities, my positionality frames this paper because I am the researcher and author of this thesis. I want to acknowledge that despite my mindfulness of critically considering student participants' perspectives and using strategies to equally share their voice, my positionality has significantly impacted the decisions I have made developing, collecting data, and analysing the data. This was not a responsibility that I took lightly. Significant effort was made to be attentive to and honour the self-representations shared

by student participants as best I could. This was achieved by recognizing the possibilities of disempowering positionalities and making space in the classroom for perspective-sharing.

Integrating Farrell's (2016) framework for reflection served to challenge and question assumptions I had about learning, teaching, and researching. Through a critical lens, I carefully considered my intrinsic philosophies, principles, and theories toward teaching, learning, and researching, and more visible factors such as what happens in the classroom (Practice) and sociocultural events that take place outside the classroom (Beyond Practice). I was consistently mindful of how I saw the world and entertained the impact this had in my roles in this research study.

It is also important to note that I saw my role in this process as a 'facilitator' of critical pedagogical practices and data collection. Auerbach (2001) notes that there can be resistance and refusal to engage in critical activities by students because they want traditional methods to be upheld. They maintain that

[t]he teachers' role in this process is to identify shared problematic aspects of learners' day-to-day lives, re-present them to learners as content for dialogue and literacy work, and guide reflection on individual experience of these problems to more critical analysis.
(p. 276)

This challenge was evident in the data collection process and is discussed in further depth in Chapter 4.

Research Design

Qualitative research plays a pivotal role in advancing the cause of social justice by providing a nuanced understanding of lived experiences in underrepresented groups (Creswell, 2007). As such, adopting a qualitative approach is an appropriate fit for this research study that

focuses on the human experience of one ESL teacher implementing critical pedagogy with immigrant adult ESL students.

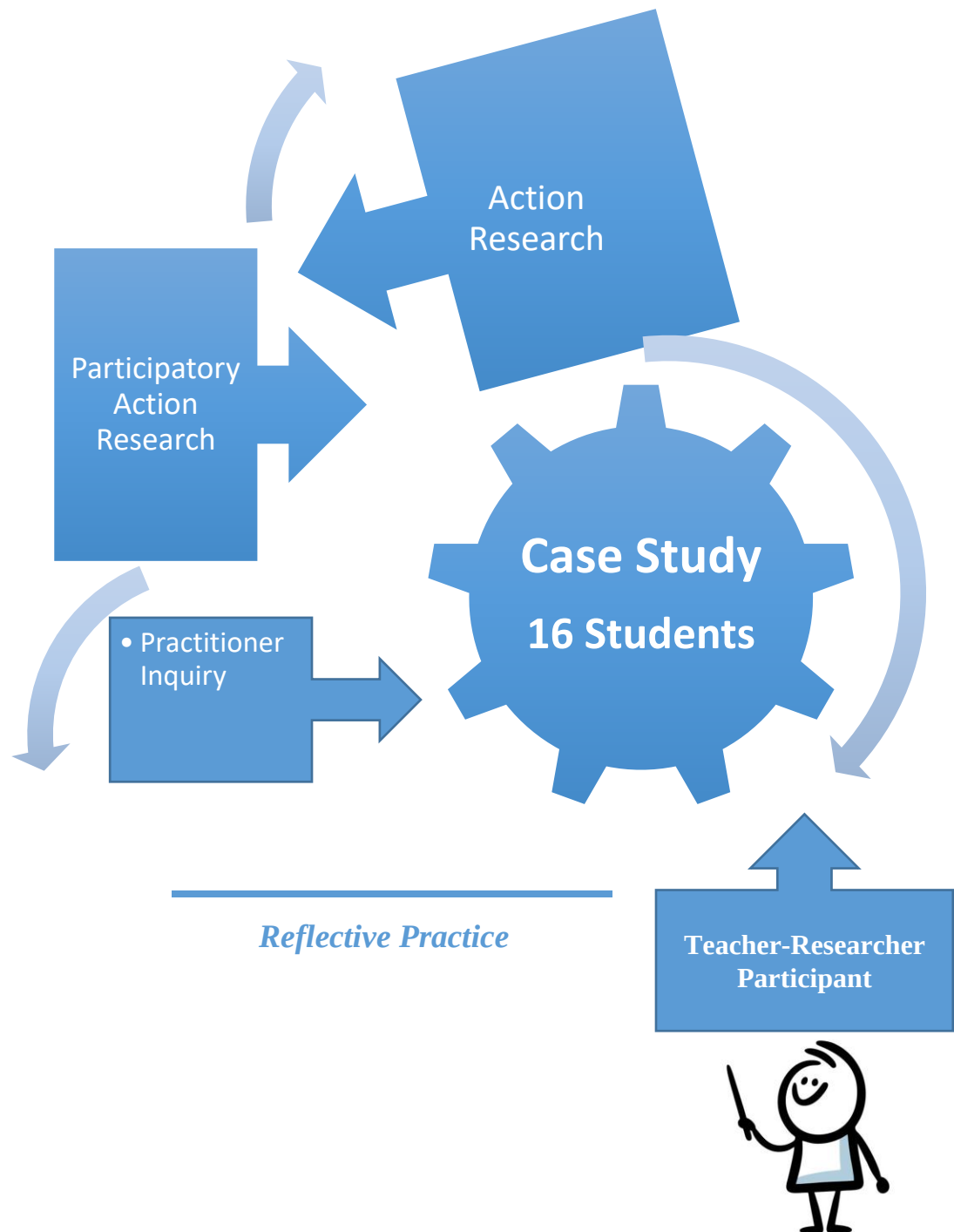
Qualitative research presents an opportunity to gather rich and valuable data, yielding detailed insights. This research study employed a hybrid design for gathering data that incorporated features of action research, participatory action research, practitioner inquiry, and case study. I have labelled the interconnection of these methods as an 'action-oriented case study'. The interplay of these methodologies contributes to the richness of the collected data as they all have an emphasis on context, action, collaboration, and they all have the goal of generating practical insights for real-world settings.

Interplay of Methodologies

Figure 1 below shows the interconnections of the methodologies of action research (AR), participatory action research (PAR), and practitioner inquiry (PI) embedded within a focus on reflective practice using a case study methodology.

Figure 1

Interconnections of Research Methods



As both the teacher and researcher in this study, I autonomously employed characteristics of Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Practitioner Inquiry (PI) in a critically-oriented manner. AR formed the foundational framework for iterative cycles of reflection and action that I embraced as the teacher-researcher throughout the research process. PAR fostered an inclusive and collaborative approach that prioritized the voices and agency of the student participants, while acknowledging that the study revolved around my reflective practice as the teacher-researcher. Additionally, the use of PI emphasized the active involvement of student participants in the research process and guided my various roles within the study. The interplay among these methodologies facilitated a dynamic exploration of my guiding research question, enriching both my Field Notes and the reflective nature of my data analysis.

Each of these methodologies will be explained in more detail in the subsequent sections, providing a comprehensive understanding of their respective contributions to the research process.

Action Research

Action research, as articulated by Burns (2005, 2009), revolves around participants, including teachers, researchers, and students — taking proactive steps in the classroom and investigating the ensuing impact as a research tool. This approach gained formal recognition in the field of second-language teacher education in the late 1980s (Burns, 2009). The integration of action research follows a cyclic process outlined by Kemmis et al. (2014), involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Emphasizing the essential role of reflection in its process, action research necessitates teachers assessing their values and beliefs about teaching and learning and fostering a heightened sense of accountability for their actions in the classroom (Farrell, 2006). Because I approached this research study from the point of view of examining my teacher perspectives and experiences in order to contribute a nuanced understanding of implementing critical pedagogy in an ESL classroom, the cyclical nature of action research and its potential to produce change were deemed to be an appropriate fit.

Action research's cyclical methodology of planning, executing, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014) served as the guiding framework for my investigation within the LINC classroom. In the planning phase, considerations for classroom activities and engagement were explored both with and without a critical pedagogical framework. I took opportunities to administer activities 'as is' according to the instructions in the course book and also planned my own lessons with a critical pedagogical framework. Table 1 outlines the various classroom activities in which I attempted to implement critical pedagogy.

Table 1*Activities of Study*

Activity/ Focus	Overview of Activity	Main Texts Used	Data Collected
1. Lesson on Police	This activity involved carrying out the LINC lesson 'as is'.	<i>LINC Classroom Activities</i> (2009) (LINC 1)	-Whiteboard answers on warm-up -Questionnaire developed by students for local police officer -Handouts from activity book -Field Notes
2. Lesson on Celebrations	This activity involved carrying out the LINC lesson 'as is'.	<i>LINC Classroom Activities</i> (2009) (LINC 1)	-Whiteboard answers on warm-up -Handouts from activity book -Field Notes
3. Questionnaire (on L1)	These were opinion questions on using L1 in the classroom and served to gain student participants' perspectives.	Questionnaire developed by me (researcher)	-Researcher-developed questionnaire -Revised questionnaire with students' input responses -Field Notes
4. Problem-posing activity	This involved using a parent/teacher picture to guide a lesson in order to carry out a well-known critical pedagogical practice	Picture & guiding questions developed by me (teacher) (Modelled from Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004)	-Researcher-developed drawing -Problem-posing questions -Field Notes
5. Questionnaire (needs assessment)	Students reported what they need English for. This activity served to understand if students' needs were topics in teaching resources	Questionnaire developed by me (researcher)	-Questionnaire responses from students -Field Notes
6. An 'On Target' assessment	I (researcher) observed reactions/behaviours to administering an 'On Target' ('as is') assessment in order to investigate participants' reactions	Resource: On Target	Field Notes
7. General observations & dialogues with participants throughout the study	I (researcher) observed general behaviours that impacted critical pedagogical engagement During this time, discussions were encouraged when I saw a need to address a critical pedagogical concern	Attendance Policy Continuous intake policy	-Attendance Policy - Field Notes

Note: Preparatory, classroom, and reflection notes were included for each of these activities

The 'Overview of Activity' column depicts what my intentions for each activity. For each activity, preparatory, classroom, and reflective Field Notes were recorded. Additional data collected such as LINC Teacher's Guide excerpts are listed in Table 1. The activities and expectations that were used to structure the class activities initially reflected different degrees of criticality. My objective was to experiment with different texts and expectations in the classroom in order to reflect on their critical effectiveness via active student engagement.

The execution of classroom work and engagement followed characteristics of an action-oriented methodology, including deliberate planning, carrying out classroom activities, observing what was taking place, and reflecting on the classroom interactions (Kemmis et al., 2014). At times, I was keen on using the teaching materials according to the instructions provided in the teacher's guide, but at other times, I mindfully infused aspects of critical pedagogy into what an activity or lesson. These moments provided me with opportunities to reflect on different degrees of what I deemed to be critically-oriented. However, during the observation phase, I consistently approached classroom interactions with critical curiosity and often used problem-posing (Freire, 1970) questions with participants to enhance my critical understanding. Subsequently, the reflection phase often inspired transformative changes in the moment or was reserved for future consideration. These reflections formed an integral part of the data analysis for this research.

Recent scholars (Luttenberg et al., 2017) highlight the complexities within action research, noting that reflective practice predominantly centers on the teacher's cognitive activity. Rooted in Dewey's (1933) concept of reflective teaching, which emphasizes teacher responsibility for their practices, Schön (1987) expanded on reflective practice by

acknowledging the continuous influence of teachers' values and judgments in learning environments. This perspective aligns with complexity science's holistic examination of learning systems, spanning from individual to collective levels. Luttenberg and colleagues have explored the complexity of reflection in action research. They emphasize the role of values and existential knowledge in education. Reflection in action research involves bridging the gap between theory and practice, aiming for rigorous reflection and data collection.

By considering reflection as a complex system, we can better understand its dynamics and manage its unpredictability. Recognizing the power of complexity science in elucidating the interplay between individual and collective knowledge generation, it becomes imperative to explore how individual reflections contribute to systemic reflection and connect with broader collective knowledge development (Luttenberg et al., 2017).

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is distinct from traditional action research. PAR actively involves and incorporates reflections from student participants (Burns, 2009). PAR operates on core principles that involve an iterative process, reviewing current practices within a critical pedagogical framework, identifying areas for improvement, envisioning change, implementing interventions, observing outcomes, adapting plans based on observations, and repeating until desired actions materialize (McNiff, 2001). The emphasis on active participation, recognition of political biases, exploration of power dynamics, reflective practice, and transformation of both the means and ends of the study makes PAR a valuable tool in research (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Price & Mencke, 2013; Miskovic & Hoop, 2006; Udas, 1998). The incorporation of critical theory and practice into PAR has led to the term "critical action research," challenging traditional power structures and fostering collaboration between

researchers and participants (Given, 2008; Maguire, 1987). Throughout this study, however, the term "participatory action research" was retained to underscore the student participants' role in informing the direction of the research as well as the researcher's active involvement during data collection and the central role of critique in the transformative process.

Similar to features of practitioner inquiry, as discussed in the following subsection, I relied on student participants' viewpoints to guide my research. The 'participatory' component involved asking students questions that reflected my perception of the feasibility of implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom. Additionally, transformative changes were made or considered at times, aligning with a key component of participatory action research (PAR).

Practitioner Inquiry

Research can take a more expansive trajectory by adopting a practitioner inquiry lens, a perspective that places students at the core of the learning and teaching experience (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This approach acknowledges the multiple roles of the researcher, who simultaneously acts as an instructor, teacher, researcher, and participant. Studies conducted through practitioner inquiry can embrace the dual role of a teacher/researcher, fostering the generation of detailed and insightful analyses of teaching and learning from an insider's perspective (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009).

Inspired by the collaborative, risk-taking, and reflective nature of practitioner inquiry, research within this framework can critically engage with the dynamics of the objects of study (Rutten, 2021). This research entailed the collaborative nature of practitioner inquiry, which involves developing shared learning experiences and collective problem-solving among the instructor and student participants. This engagement ensures a comprehensive understanding of

the intricacies inherent in the teaching and learning process, promoting a more holistic and nuanced perspective that goes beyond traditional research approaches.

I applied this approach in my research by maintaining awareness of the complex roles I undertook throughout the process. Student participants were placed at the core of the study, and their engagement with my reflections provided substantial insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing critical pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Additionally, their positionalities, as I had understood them, guided my critical understandings.

Case Study

Case studies are recognized as one of the most widely used methods in education and applied linguistics (Duff, 2008). Case studies, as defined by Yin (2018), provide a comprehensive and all-encompassing exploration of social phenomena. This research method involves an in-depth investigation into an individual, a group, or a unit, aiming to draw broader generalizations across multiple units (Heale & Twycross, 2018, p. 7). In the realm of social science, case study research often focuses on situations of heightened complexity. This focus can include the analysis of a community's approach to addressing a prevalent societal issue, assessing the efficacy of a program, or investigating the implications of a specific policy (Mabry, 2008). In the instance of this research study, the phenomenon I examined was the implementation of critical pedagogical approaches in the ESL classroom.

In my research study, I aimed to investigate the reflections and experiences from one particular teacher's perspective (mine) within a defined timeframe (7 weeks) and location (an ESL class for adults with low proficiency in English). This specification aligns with what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) characterize as a "unit of analysis" and a "bounded system" (pp. 38-39). Establishing these boundaries set the scope for my research study and aided in prioritizing

data collection and analysis. Furthermore, my action-oriented case study is an example of a descriptive case study, because I sought to describe my thoughts and feelings about my experience with critical pedagogy in an ESL classroom (Yin, 2018). It is an intrinsic case study because the unit of analysis was specifically selected due to its proximity and availability to the researcher (Stake, 2005). Furthermore, it provided me, the researcher, with a deeper understanding of the classroom dynamics that might not be as apparent through other research methods. Examining a facet of a classroom through case study research allows for drawing conclusions regarding program effectiveness and illuminating potential areas of concern. The objective was to generate insightful knowledge that can contribute to empowerment within similar settings, specifically federally funded adult ESL programs. While this case study is not intended to be universally applicable to all educators in adult ESL programming, it does shed light on the challenges faced by teachers instructing a low-proficiency ESL class for adults with low proficiency in English. Additionally, the findings may resonate with educators who share similar contexts or attributes to my positionalities.

Critical Pedagogy within a Methodology

Despite my strong beliefs about critical pedagogy being an approach and attitude in learning and teaching spaces, CP also plays out as a methodology aligned with the principles of action research and more specifically, participatory action research. The goals are the same—critical reflection for positive transformation. In contrast to criticism of AR, however, the reflective nature of action research often lacks the idealizations of change in a critical pedagogical approach and quite often only offers deeper understandings of a social phenomenon (Burns, 2017). This research study centers on the intention to foster collaboration, empowerment, co-learning, and the creation of inclusive environments among student participants. Informed by

critical pedagogical frameworks, the study aligns with the principles of participatory action research.

Conceptual Framework: Adult ESL Programming as a Political Act

Regarding educational environments as political in nature was a driving concept that underpins this research. This research is premised on the position that everything we teach has political value (Auerbach, 2001; Burns, 2005; Freire, 1970). Though the intention of education may not explicitly appear to be politically driven, the reasons for policy creation around program and curriculum development has important political implications. McLaren (2016) observes that formal educational institutions are designed to produce particular forms of social life. That is, programs and curricula are designed to legitimize the status quo and dominant ideologies. Within this production of knowledge, inequalities and disempowering power structures are perpetuated and maintained. What – indeed, *who* – is included (or perhaps more importantly, *excluded*) in language programs created for newcomers to Canada impacts the well-being of those who attend (and those who are restricted from attending).

A critical exploration of the circumstances of this research is, therefore, necessary. The examination extends to a myriad of factors influencing criticality, including program policies, teaching materials, participants' perspectives, and the inherent features of the program. Central to the research is the guiding principle of incorporating as many participant voices as possible to ensure the authenticity of their political, social, and language needs. Throughout the study, deliberate efforts were made to provide participants with a platform to express their concerns, presenting their viewpoints on the materials and topics introduced in the class.

In a critical pedagogical approach, transforming educational environments to become more egalitarian and equitable are central goals (Canagarajah, 2005). This involved

acknowledging and reflecting on the power dynamics of the physical space of the classroom and considering Freire's (1970) banking concept of education, which suggests the teacher is the all-knowing leader of the classroom who uncontestedly deposits knowledge into students (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, deliberations on how ideas and information were shared in class were evaluated to determine if student participants were able to be "critical co-investigators in dialogue with [each other and] with the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 81). Lastly, I also considered how the imbalance of language proficiency in English affected student participants and provided opportunities for them to use their L1 to convey their thoughts and ideas. This involved a lot of support from staff and students in higher-proficiency classes. Many times, I would quickly pop in a class or office and ask for translation support. In other instances, students were very strategic to help each other by gesturing or grabbing a whiteboard marker and drawing an image on the board. As the teacher, I was very animated when I explained ideas and topics, which at times, made for some good laughter. Needless to say, communication yielded some difficulties, but through translations, emotions, animations, and convictions, main ideas were as effectively conveyed as possible by participants. Figure 2 highlights my conceptual framework.

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework

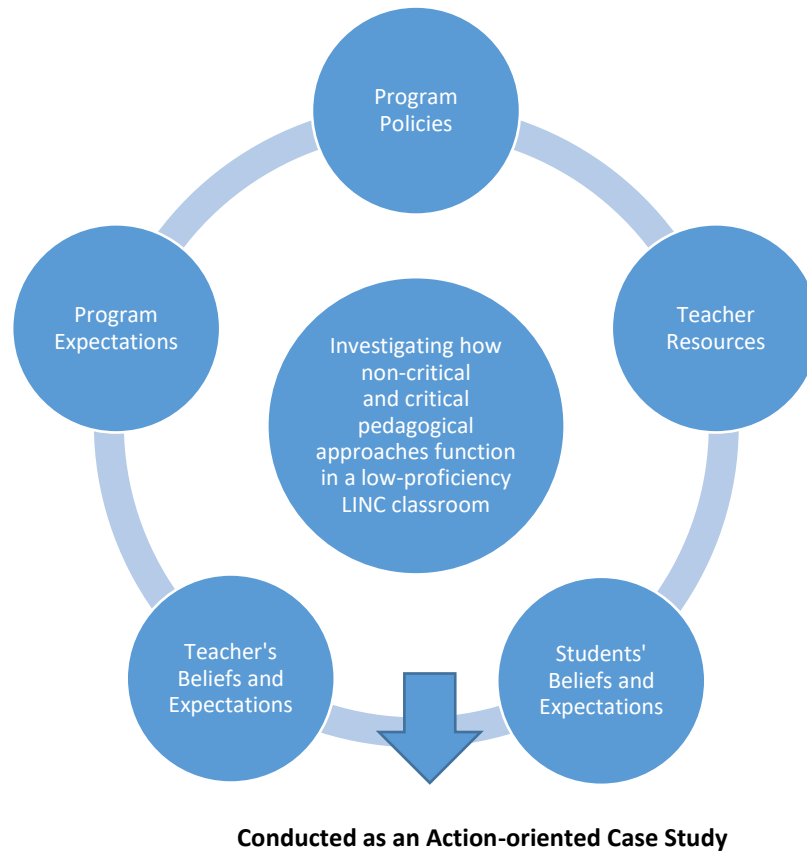


Figure 2 identifies key features in the LINC program that influenced my research focus. I concentrated on program policies, teacher resources, and reflected on the extent to which student expectations, my own perspectives, and program expectations either supported or hindered critical pedagogical approaches.

Summary of Research Design

Combining features of AR, PAR, and PI provided me the opportunity to engage in fundamental aspects of reflective practice. According to Farrell (2015), reflective practice is “a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice, and, while engaging in dialogue with others, use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 123). Furthermore,

Farrell (2015) maintains that reflective practice involves a continuous cycle of observing and analyzing one's teaching methods, experiences, and interactions in the classroom. It examines the underlying beliefs, assumptions, and values that influence teaching decisions. These ideas are rooted in Dewey's (1933) notions of reflective practice, which emphasize the importance of experience, inquiry, and experimentation in learning. With this in mind, I was able to tune in to reflective practice while I planned, observed, reflected, and transformed the teaching and learning spaces as part of the action cycle during this research study. In addition, to ensure transparency about the inherently subjective nature of my reflections, I have situated myself in Chapter 1 and provided my philosophical perspective at the beginning of this chapter, acknowledging their influence on the core values presented in reflective practice.

As noted in Chapter 2, Schön (1983) delineates three forms of reflection: Reflection-for-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-in-action. These features of reflective practice further informed my research. In the planning stage of conducting my action research, I was informed by reflection-for-action as I contemplated possibilities and strategies guided by my research question, which aims to explore my experiences of implementing a critical pedagogical approach within the classroom. I adopted reflection-in-action by using a critical pedagogical framework while making judgments and decisions during classroom activities. When class was not in session, I utilized reflection-on-action to critically analyze the teaching and learning experience.

In addition, by adopting PAR, I was able to involve student participants in this research by inviting them to respond to my problem-posing questions and being more actively involved in lessons that were intended to be critically-oriented. Furthermore, I was inspired by the collaborative, risk-taking, and introspective aspects of practitioner inquiry, which also reinforced a student-centered focus of this study.

Research Setting

The field of anthropology introduced ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) whereby detailed and contextually rich observations were well documented to get a better understanding of behaviours and interactions that occurred in a research study. Duff (2008) contends that in a qualitative case study, thick descriptions of the research setting are necessary to allow for readers to make informed decisions of conclusions that are made throughout the research. Duff (2008) further indicates that thick descriptions of a research setting include content about the background, environment, participants, types of activities, scheduling of activities, typical routines, and societal norms of the classroom.

To conduct this qualitative research study, over the course of 7 weeks, on a daily basis, I met with a diverse group of adult ESL students enrolled in my LINC 1 language learning class for adults with low proficiency in English. Out of respect for students’ personal time and commitments, I ensured that student participants spent minimal time outside of classroom hours completing work related to the research or to our class. Assigning homework was not a common practice in our class, so, aside from the L1 survey, letter of intent (for friends or family members), and consent form, the majority of tasks for this research were accomplished in class. Whatever ‘work’ that was assigned for home was provided to give student participants an opportunity to review it with someone in their household. As a result, it was necessary to perform many of the activities I needed for this research study concurrently with my instructor obligations. At times, this overlapped with the goals of the program, but on some occasions, class time was reserved for research-based work. This included filling out forms and spending more time for discussions. During this time, other teaching and learning took place, but were not considered for this research. Table 2 presents an overview of the week-by-week research.

Table 2*Week-by-week Overview of Research*

Week #	Research Weeks (2013)	Research Focus	Data Tools/Resources
1	May 6-10	Completing consent forms Gathering information from students	Participant information form
2	May 13-17	Conducting needs Assessment	Handout developed by Christine: <i>Where do you speak English?</i> <i>Who do you speak English with?</i> Handout developed by Christine: <i>What do you want to learn about?</i>
		L1 usage in the classroom	Survey
3	May 20-24	Learning about Canadian culture: <i>Celebrations/birthdays</i>	Handouts: <i>When is your birthday?</i> <i>LINC Classroom Activities</i> (2009, pp. 121-140)
4	May 27-31	Learning about Canadian culture: <i>Responding to good & bad news</i>	Handouts: <i>What do you say?</i> <i>LINC Classroom Activities</i> (2009, pp. 141-145)
5	June 3-7	Education: Children's school	Problem-posing activity developed from Wallerstein & Auerbach (Problem-Posing at Work: Popular Educator's Guide, 2004, p. 95)
6	June 10 - 14	Canadian Law: Policing	Handouts: <i>Asking [police] for help</i> <i>LINC Classroom Activities</i> (2009, pp. 161-165) Participant-developed questionnaire for our guest police officer
7	June 17 - 21	Discussion on attendance Formal Assessments	Facilitated with problem-posing questions Assessment Handouts from On Target (1998)

Note: Preparatory, classroom, and reflection Field Notes were written on a daily basis throughout this study.

As Table 2 outlines, I initially began this research by having student participants filling out consent and demographic forms. In Week 2, we spent time completing a couple of needs

assessments activities to investigate topics students were interested in learning. We also completed a questionnaire on using L1 in the classroom. In Weeks 3 to 6, we covered topics from the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002). Our last week focused on discussing issues surrounding adhering to the attendance policy and conducting formal assessments.

Many of the activities we did in class were approached differently because I wanted to explore how they interacted with critical pedagogical approaches; these are noted in my Field Notes. However, throughout this process, I aimed to maintain the program's expectations. Although not all the teacher resources and classroom activities we did during this 7-week timeframe are included in this research study, classroom and reflection notes were written daily to capture what discourses were taking place in the class, and how I reacted to them as a participant and critical researcher.

To ensure a thick descriptions of the research setting, additional information is provided in three subsections: (1) the broader content of LINC programming; (2) the school where this study was conducted; and (3) the LINC classroom in which this study was researched.

LINC Programming: Enrollment and Participation

As previously discussed, LINC is a federally funded adult ESL program and free for those enrolled in the program. Registration in all LINC programs is based on status in the country, open to all permanent residents and Convention refugees of Canada aged 18 or older. It is not open to Canadian citizens. To enroll in a LINC program, prospective students make an appointment with an authorized assessment centre. A certified assessor then determines a potential student's skill levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing using the *CLB* (2012). These *CLB* levels are entered into a database available to all ESL programs. Assessors can then guide prospective students to programs offered by the government according to their needs and

preferences as well as the program resources available. This includes spaces in the program, class times, location, childminding needs, and other personal preferences. It is my understanding that a student can ultimately decide which school they would like to register.

Within a program, it is common for students in a single class to have proficiency at different CLB levels across the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing because placement is generally determined on the skill in which the student has the greatest proficiency (with a focus on speaking and listening). In other words, each class will have a range of proficiency across the different skills. For example, a student with CLB 1 in listening, speaking, and reading and CLB 2 in writing may be enrolled in a LINC 2 class. Alternatively, a literacy student with CLB 0 in reading and writing and CLB 2 in listening and speaking may also be placed in the same class.

The mandate of LINC is to “provide basic language instruction to adult newcomers in both official languages and to facilitate the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society” (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002, p. 6). This is achieved by determining “what learners can do” in English or French (*LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002, p. 7) based on the *CLB* (2012). Instructors are required to develop topics in their class and assess learners on achieving *real world tasks*. These are assessment tasks that mirror language use outside of the classroom. Real world tasks typically focus on one skill (listening, reading, writing, or speaking), and align with *CLB* criteria. It is unclear to me how other programs determine topics and real-world assessment tasks for their classrooms, but I normally conduct a needs assessment guided by the LINC Curriculum’s themes and topics and plan my lessons and assessments accordingly. For instructors to designate CLB levels, students must have a sufficient number of assessments completed in each skill. My understanding at the time of my research

study was that there was a requirement for six to eight assessments, but it has since changed to eight to ten (*PBLA Practice Guidelines*, 2019).

The School: Non-Profit Community-Based Organization

This research took place in a non-profit community-based organization that offers settlement services to newcomers. Although services are available for all newcomers, this organization focuses on the needs of the Somali community and was founded with that intention in mind. It was situated in Toronto, Ontario, the Canadian city with the largest number of recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022). It was located on the second floor of a shopping plaza and shared space with other businesses. I am familiar with the area as I have had relatives living there since the early nineties, and I also lived in the vicinity with my family for a couple of years. At the time of my research, the area had a reputation for being a dangerous area of Toronto. This perception of the area aligned with my own experience living and working in the area for the last 25 years. Police were regularly on site or parked nearby, and Toronto Police Service documents indicated that this area had higher crime rates than the rest of the city (Toronto Police Service, 2021). Students and staff were regularly required to address issues of drug dealing, assault, prostitution, and theft on the property.

This community-based settlement organization operated four LINC classes and other settlement services for newcomers. On-site childminding services were available to LINC students who needed support for their young families. These services were limited, and the number of children permitted was contingent on provincial childcare regulations, so not all parent-students were able to access this service. There were often waitlists for parents with infants or parents with multiple children because the childminding centre did not have sufficient permitted space.

Like other LINC programs, this program offered continuous intake. In other words, new students could register and start attending classes at any time between September at the start of the school year until the end of the school year in June. During the data collection phase, all classes except for the literacy class took place from Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. Instructors were expected to reserve class time for teaching only; any planning or preparation is unpaid time.

The program schedule and LINC levels offered at this centre are noted in Table 3.

Table 3

Class Schedule

Class Level	Class Time
Literacy	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
LINC 1	9:00 am – 2:30 pm
LINC 2/3	9:00 am – 2:30 pm
LINC 4/5	9:00 am – 2:30 pm

Note: Coffee break was from 10:45-11:00 am and lunch break was from 12:15-12:45 pm.

Students were expected to attend LINC classes regularly and on time, and to stay until the end of the school day, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. At the time of data collection, it was widespread practice that funding policies required a minimum of 70% attendance level. Lower attendance levels could lead to the elimination of a class. This policy was relayed to students at the beginning of the school year in an assembly-type meeting, and individually throughout the year with new registrants. The front staff administrator reviewed the attendance policy with each student and requested their signature on an attendance "contract." Despite federal policies on this issue, our program attendance policy attempted to address the needs of students with school-aged

children by providing some grace time in the morning for student parents to get their children off to school. Failure to comply with the contract could ultimately lead to the dismissal of students. However, this has rarely happened in the program.

At the time of this study, this LINC program was staffed by four LINC instructors (one for each class), four childminding staff, one office administrator, one settlement counsellor, and a LINC coordinator. The LINC coordinator was supportive and encouraging. Other settlement staff members also supported this work and, in some cases, helped with translation services when needed.

The LINC 1 Class

This participatory action research (PAR) took place in my LINC 1 class toward the end of the school term from May to June. The participants of this study included me, the teacher/instructor, and all 16 students enrolled and attending the class. At the time when this research was conducted, I had already developed a good rapport with most student participants because many of them had been in my class most of the year. However, there were a few participants who were relatively new to the class.

The classroom where this research was conducted was situated between another classroom and a hair salon. The thin walls that divided these spaces created an environment where distractions were in abundance; music playing, blow dryers going off, and classroom activities from the adjacent class could easily be heard. It was fairly spacious with a sufficient number of chairs and collapsible tables for students to adequately work and move around. Two large white boards covered the left wall, a wall of windows were adjacent to the wall, and a room divider provided full access to the bordering classroom.

Students attending this class were in the LINC 1 class and although most proficiency levels fall in the CLB 1 range, there were some literacy (CLB 0) - CLB 4 skill levels. The *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (2012) are a framework used to assess and describe the English language proficiency of adult immigrants in Canada. CLB levels range from 1 to 12, with higher levels indicating greater proficiency. CLB 0-4 specifically refers to the lower proficiency levels within this framework.

Table 4 outlines each participant's CLB level in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Table 4*Proficiency Level of Student Participants*

Participant #	Participant pseudonym	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	Ahlam	1	1	0	0
2	Asha	1	1	0	0
3	Dah eh	1	1	0	1
4	Farhia	3	3	1	2
5	Halima	1	1	0	0
6	Jampel	1	1	1	1
7	Nuh	1	1	1	1
8	Nuro	1	1	0	0
9	Roda	1	1	1	1
10	Sadia	1	1	1	1
11	Sahro	1	1	2	1
12	Sharif	4	4	1	1
13	Sutha	1	1	2	3
14	Thao	1	1	0	0
15	Xheva	1	1	1	2
16	Zahra	3	3	1	1

Our class was considered ‘full-time’ in the LINC program, which entails five hours of ‘teaching time’; this refers to contact hours between instructors and students for teaching and completing student tasks. Table 5 shows how time was constructed in our class.

Table 5

Typical Classroom Routine

Time	Routine
9 am – 9:30 am	Review/filler work assigned while late students arrive
9:30 am – 10:45 am	Class ‘officially’ begins
10:45 am – 11 am	Coffee break
11 am – 12:15 pm	Morning lesson continues
12:15 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch break
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Afternoon class begins with a focus on practicing skills

The routines in our class considered a late start because some students needed to drop off older children to their respective schools before coming to our school. From 9 to 9:30, I usually provided handouts of grammar items that we had already covered in class. At 9:30, I typically started my lesson. I have found that in the mornings, student seem to have more time and attention to learning new or difficult concepts, so I planned my lessons accordingly. Attendance issues have been a concern in the afternoons, so I tried to reserve this time to engage in fun and less high stakes activities. These activities usually focused on practicing conversation/speaking skills or playing fun and interactive learning games. Furthermore, in the afternoon, as many Muslim students went to another room to pray, I took this 15 to 20-minute interruption into consideration with regard to what activities I planned in the afternoon. In terms of curriculum planning and teaching approaches, I exercised a lot of autonomy, which gave me flexibility on

the content and style of teaching I wanted to subscribe to. In general, I followed the themes and topics outlines in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) to structure my lessons.

Classroom Strategies

In this study, reflective practices significantly supported AR and PAR processes. The lessons and interactions carried out in this research were facilitated using two different modes and with the intention to critically reflect throughout the process: first, by utilizing readily available resources ‘as they were’ and secondly; by designing lesson plans and resources to foster critical engagement. In this planning stage of AR, I considered how the activities fostered features of critical pedagogy, particularly focusing on ideas surrounding social justice, including examining power dynamics inherent in the lesson and assessing whether the activities promoted egalitarian principles. These considerations were also carried out in the execution, observing, and reflective stage of AR as well.

In all instances, I used critical reflections to ascertain the clarity and effectiveness of classroom learning and engagement. The process of praxis (action and reflection) spontaneously transformed what teaching and learning was taking place and how it was accomplished. This notion stems from Freirean teaching practices that advocate for critical reflection as part of the learning and teaching experience with the goal to transform classroom spaces from domination to liberation (Freire, 1970). Praxis entails a cycle in the teaching and learning process whereby classroom spaces provide opportunities to listen to gain understandings of issues, critically dialogue those issues, and act to empower the learning space. In some respects, this could be considered ‘dynamic analyses’ of data. In other words, analyses of criticality were explored in-the-moment and lessons and interactions changed accordingly. Two key methods were employed to facilitate critical transformations: problem-posing and ‘critical pivoting.’ Both of these

methods are part of the planning stage of AR and fuel reflective practice strategies used in my data collection and analysis.

Problem-Posing

Problem-posing is an approach to teaching and learning that allows one to be conscious of one's place in the world (Freire, 1970). This method of teaching invites dialogue in educational settings for knowledge to be collaboratively formed by students and educators alike. Freire accomplished this by creating 'culture circles' in his literacy classes where he used pictures to provoke students to critically think about their social situations (Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004). Problem-posing allows for a period of questioning to critically explore the status quo. Questions are centered on raising awareness of inequalities with a focus to transform the classroom and broader social systems. In this research, problem-posing strategies were guided by Wallerstein and Auerbach's (2004) methods (see Figure 3):

Figure 3

Model for Problem-posing Strategies



Note: Adapted from Wallerstein, N., & Auerbach, E. (2004). *Problem-posing at work: Popular educator's guide*. Grass Roots Press.

Figure 3 highlights the ways in which I encouraged knowledge-sharing. These problem-posing strategies were adapted throughout this research on an on-going basis. I often asked students to brainstorm ideas on the topic we were learning, and we wrote them on the whiteboard. Most often, this activity led to valuable insights and relevant learning. At times, I divided students into smaller groups to share their ideas and then, brought the whole class back together to share their key findings. In most cases, when I was problem-posing, I often asked

open-ended questions. These questions were sometimes pre-planned, but at times, I created them spontaneously. Furthermore, students were encouraged to ask questions themselves. I would purposefully take long pauses to provide opportunities for question-asking. Within this strategy however, I was mindful to make learning a priority and when topics digressed, I brought us back to the learning topic.

There were three ways in which problem-posing was utilized in this research. They were informed by Freire's (1970) notions of limit situations (discussing obstacles), conscientização (striving to have more in-depth understandings of the world), and praxis (reflecting and taking action). Dialogue was encouraged during classroom lessons and discussions. Open-ended questions were encouraged to stimulate participants' understandings of the world (and classroom) and ponder what obstacles could get in the way. Secondly, problem-posing was employed during the reflection stage of classroom activities. These questions were intended to allow participants to think about the lesson and how it related to them and the broader social context. Lastly, problem-posing was achieved similarly to Freire's (1970) method whereby a picture of a social setting was introduced in the classroom and questions were asked as a way to better understand students' positionalities. This latter approach to problem-posing was utilized as part of a critical lesson I had developed and will be discussed further. In all cases however, the 'coming of knowledge' that preceded problem-posing questioning aimed to initiate dynamic shifts in lessons and classroom interactions.

Critical Pivoting

Critical pivoting is a term I have developed and implemented in this research to describe how I changed classroom interactions and lessons to be more critically engaging. It is an extension of problem-posing and expands on the process of making critical changes in the

classroom. These pedagogical shifts were carried out when lessons and classroom interactions appeared to be disempowering. These instances primarily occurred when pre-designed materials intended for adult ESL programs, readily accessible for use, were employed in the classroom. Two key examples of critical pivoting in this research relate to the lessons on birthdays and policing, which are elaborated on in subsequent sections. In both of these instances, after the process of problem-posing and observing tension and disengagement, I made the decision to modify the lessons to reflect these topics in a more critically-friendly approach.

Lessons were modified (or ‘pivoted’) when collaborative discussions and behaviours in the class demonstrated a barrier to critical teaching and learning. This is a strategy of reflective practice that models Schön’s (1983) reflection-in-action, which involves being aware of what is occurring in the moment and making adjustments or decisions in real-time. In this respect, the classroom pedagogy was *transformed*; a key goal in the critical pedagogical movement (Canagarajah, 2005). These moments were assessed in-the-moment and based on interactions that occurred in the classroom. Deciding when to critically pivot was determined by observing body language, awareness of conflict in the classroom, and most importantly, by uncovering non-critical idealizations through problem-posing questioning. Critical pivots were directed by me, the teacher, but heavily influenced by students and their contributions to the classroom space. For a more comprehensive exploration of this approach, please refer to Smart-Wiseman (2022).

An examination of the data collected allowed me to consider to what extent I was able to critically pivot a lesson or classroom interaction. These factors will be discussed in the data analysis chapter. Although the decision to critically pivot was ultimately decided by me as the teacher, student participants offered substantial input in that process during problem-posing

discussions. Moreover, I drew on my informed understandings of critical pedagogy to determine when dynamic shifts (or, ‘critical pivoting’) in the teaching and learning process should take place. Students participated in these pivots by sharing their perspectives and emotions. I also incorporated my interpretations, which were informed by student feedback, regarding their disconnection from the lesson content in relation to their lives and autonomy.

Participants

Student Participants

In total, 13 female students and 3 male students participated in this research, ranging in age from 23 to 76. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identity. Approximately one-third of participants had previously attended the school’s literacy class. We are told by assessment centres that if a student is registered in a literacy class, it indicates that they are non-literate in their first language. Initial literacy placement is determined by assessment centers prior to LINC placement; LINC programs do not make these designations. It is important to note that, though this research is situated in a formal educational setting, literacy students did not have background experiences in institutional learning. My experience as a LINC instructor recognizes that students who graduate from a literacy class to a LINC 1 class tend to need more support in developing their academic skills.

Nine participants were from Somalia, but others came from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Burma, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Albania. The Somali students often used Somali in class. However, the other students did not have classmates who spoke their first language. As a result, their only form of oral communication with me and their classmates was in English. Table 6 presents the data on student participants.

Table 6*Profile of Student Participants*

Participant #	Participant pseudonym	Gender	Age	Length of time in Canada	Length of time in LINC	Country of origin	Languages spoken (apart from English)
1	Ahlam	Female	46	2 years	6 months	Ethiopia	Oromo Ahmaric
2	Asha	Female	44	6 years	5 years	Somalia	Somali
3	Dah eh	Female	43	3 years	3 years	Burma	Karen
4	Farhia	Female	34	5 years	2 years	Somalia	Somali
5	Halima	Female	45	3 years	3 years	Somalia	Somali
6	Jampel	Male	76	5.5 years	5 years	Tibet (China)	Tibetan, Hindi
7	Nuh	Male	23	2 years	2 years	Somalia	Somali, Swahili
8	Nuro	Female	65	4 years	2 years	Somalia	Somali
9	Roda	Female	42	1 year	1 year	Djibouti	Somali, French
10	Sahro	Female	37	4 years	1 year	Somalia	Somali
11	Sadia	Female	32	N/A	N/A	Somalia	Somali
12	Sharif	Male	45	5 years	3 months	Somalia	Somali
13	Sutha	Female	33	7 months	5 months	Sri Lanka	Tamil
14	Thao	Female	36	8 months	7 months	Vietnam	Vietnamese
15	Xheva	Female	49	4 years	2 months	Albania	Albanian
16	Zahra	Female	23	3 years	1 month	Somalia	Somali

The summary of the participant profile unveils a diverse group of students in the study, with a notable concentration of Somali participants forming a predominant segment of the cohort. However, it's important to acknowledge the representation from various other countries, including Ethiopia, Burma, Tibet, Djibouti, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Albania, showcasing a

broad spectrum of cultural backgrounds. The student participants demonstrated varying lengths of time spent in Canada and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, encompassing both newcomers and those with several years of experience. Furthermore, linguistic diversity was evident as student participants spoke in languages such as Somali, Oromo, Karen, Hindi, Swahili, French, and Vietnamese, creating a rich tapestry of linguistic backgrounds within the student cohort. This diversity not only enhances the richness of the research but also laid the foundation for an in-depth reflective exploration of the influence of critical pedagogy in an adult ESL setting

Although the premise of this research study focuses on my perspectives and experiences, student participants shared their voices with me. Every student in the class participated and was included in my Field Notes, but some students participated more than others and are thus reflected upon differently in the data. As a result, I was able to access more insights from student participants who came to class more regularly than those who did not. This uneven distribution occurred for a variety of reasons, including attendance gaps and confidence in speaking their L2 (English). Efforts and strategies were developed to generate as much engagement as possible from all students. These are noted in my Field Notes and expanded on in the data analysis chapter.

Attention to Student Experiences

By carefully attending to the voices and narratives of the students in my reflections, my intention was to provide a comprehensive and authentic portrayal of the educational landscape. The inclusion of the student voice adds a valuable layer to the research study, by recognizing my student-centered approach that aligns with critical pedagogical values. This aspect of my

research also informed elements of my PAR methodology, as student participants contributed to my understanding of classroom dynamics and events.

The extent to which student participants could contribute, co-construct, or influence the research is detailed through descriptions of the experiences and activities documented in the study. Strategies included creating opportunities for students to share their ideas and fostering avenues for critical changes. Throughout the study, I diligently observed and recorded participants' engagement with critical pedagogical approaches, particularly in relation to program features. The perspectives and experiences of students remained the cornerstone of my approach to implementing critical pedagogy

The Teacher: Participant and Researcher

I undertook four distinct roles over the course of this research (see Table 7).

Table 7

Teacher-Researcher Roles in the Research Study

Roles	Class Instructor (Program Expectations)	Class Teacher (My Expectations)	Researcher	Research Study Participant
Tasks	• Take accountability for attendance. • Follow curricula guidelines. • Plan and prepare lessons. • Lead and assess learning. • Manage classroom discourse.	• Create a democratic learning space. • Guide critical learning. • Create critical content to teach class. • Critically pivot lessons (for self and researcher). • Support students as best I could.	• Recruit participants. • Obtain consent from participants and program administration. • Develop data to support my research question. • Pay attention to critical/uncritical occurrences. • Critically analyze classroom dynamics. • Question participants during discussions.	• Take personal reflective Field Notes. • Share insights in classroom discussions.

As the instructor, I had to maintain a learning environment consistent with the program's expectations while concurrently performing robust, systematic research, which aimed to explore critical approaches. This involved spending time before and after class and breaks planning, documenting, and coordinating. There were benefits and challenges to being both the researcher of this study, and the instructor of the class that was being researched. I had the flexibility to adjust classroom practices without the need to confer with another individual. Furthermore, the autonomy of having these dual roles provided me the ability to change classroom practices with ease. However, the challenge to record data and shift my various roles in this research study was difficult at times. I was constantly concerned about ensuring students in the class were receiving quality education but also if the quality of research I was conducting was sufficient.

While taking on the teacher and researcher role, I was also a participant in this study. Indeed, I was facilitating critical approaches, but at the same time, I was exploring my own criticality as a teacher/researcher in this program. Data includes reflection Field Notes on how my own positionality influenced the goals of supporting a critical pedagogical teaching and learning space.

Researcher Subjectivity

Despite action research being a methodology that supports participation and action from all participants (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), my role(s) in this study was much different than those of student participants. The Field Notes I had collected ultimately were written by me and although centered on students' voices and critical moments, they have been filtered through me. For this reason, accounts described in the upcoming chapters reflect my interpretation of events and are expressed in a manner to reflect that. My intention was to examine classroom interactions and engagement through a critical lens, evaluating whether the lessons, interactions,

and behaviors could be characterized as empowering or aligned with principles of social justice. To reveal my subjectivities, a discussion of my influences is outlined below. Although I have previously situated myself in the context of this research in Chapter 1, I want to enhance the accountability of my subjectivities and positionalities within this research as it shapes the lens by which I have conducted this study. With this note, I want to emphasize that participatory practices with student participants were embedded in this research, influencing learning and teaching approaches. As a result, the data supports a key voice for student participants because their words and actions prompted my reflections.

As the teacher-researcher in the study, I acknowledge the influence of my subjectivity on the data and findings. Recognizing the intrinsic complexity of AR, PAR, and PI and their connection to reflection, I want to emphasize the necessity for reflecting on data and findings while embracing uncertainties in the process. Despite potential biases arising from my subjectivities, I found it crucial to stay focused on the central goal of co-constructing rich and dynamic knowledges with student participants. (Luttenberg et al., 2017).

Recruitment and Permissions

Once I received approval from the ethics committee at York University and my LINC coordinator, the recruitment and permission process began. In the beginning of May, I explained to students that I wanted to conduct research in our class, and they had a choice to participate or not. This discussion was facilitated with the translation support of a Somali-speaking staff member and students who spoke other students' L1 from our highest-level class. Student participants were required to sign a consent form in order to participate in this research (See Appendix E: Student Participant Consent Form). It was imperative that the goals and intentions of this research were adequately communicated with the students to ensure their consent was

offered in full understanding of the research, and its risks and implications. In some cases, students were asked to review the letter of intent/consent form with family members with higher levels of English language proficiency. They were informed verbally and in writing that they could withdraw their consent at any time. In hindsight, I should have had the consent forms translated into students' L1, but I did not consider that at the time.

My role as the teacher-researcher was explained in detail, and questions were encouraged. In most cases, student participants and I had developed trusting relationships and they appeared eager to support the study. I was mindful that my role as their teacher could potentially be perceived as a method to coerce participation, so I assured everyone that regardless of their consent, my goals for this research were not contingent on their involvement. I also emphasized the critical importance of their authentic perspectives in an effort to recognize their contributions. While it is unclear whether all participants fully understood the academic process itself, I was reasonably confident that participants were adequately informed and aware of the purposes of this study. Indeed, many seemed excited to have a voice in this process.

A final step I took to ensure students were supported in this research process involved them taking home a letter of intent to friends or family members (See Appendix F: Letter to 'Helpers'). I invited students to share this letter with someone who could help them understand what I was doing. The people students chose to help them were asked to provide their name, phone number, and email address. In addition, I provided my email address and encouraged these 'helpers' to contact me with any questions or concerns they or the student participant had. This was done so student participants could discuss my intentions with others and also, be a vehicle of communication we could use in the event there were any apprehensions. It worked out well because in the process, I got to know some people close to student participants. This was

important because it created a better bond between me and some student participants. They were happy to connect people in their lives to me, and the classroom experiences they were having.

Ultimately, all 16 students who were attending the class agreed to participate in this research study. Throughout the course of this study, I was not aware of any serious concerns or regrets from student participants. In order to provide anonymity in the reporting, pseudonyms have been used to protect student participants' identities.

Data Collection

The data gathered for this research incorporated multiple sources. The collection of data was guided by clear intentions during the planning stage, inviting student participants to share their ideas during classroom activities, and fostering a high degree of reflection throughout the process. These characteristics align with what I have identified as a reflective, action-oriented case study methodology completed over the course of 7 weeks.

Using a wide variety of data sources is beneficial in creating a complete picture and developing greater understanding of the phenomenon under question (Yin, 2018), which in this action-oriented case study is the implementation of critical pedagogy in an ESL classroom. My primary source consisted of Field Notes. My secondary sources of data included the results of a demographic survey of participants, a review of various documents such as the Attendance Policy and attendance records, various classroom texts and teaching resources, student questionnaires, and researcher-developed materials. All these sources were used as a baseline to promote classroom discussions, and my thoughts, observations, and experiences of working with these materials with the student participants were recorded in my Field Notes. What I chose to record in my Field Notes relied heavily on the engagement I had with student participants as well as my own critical agenda. These multiple sources of data provided valuable insights into the

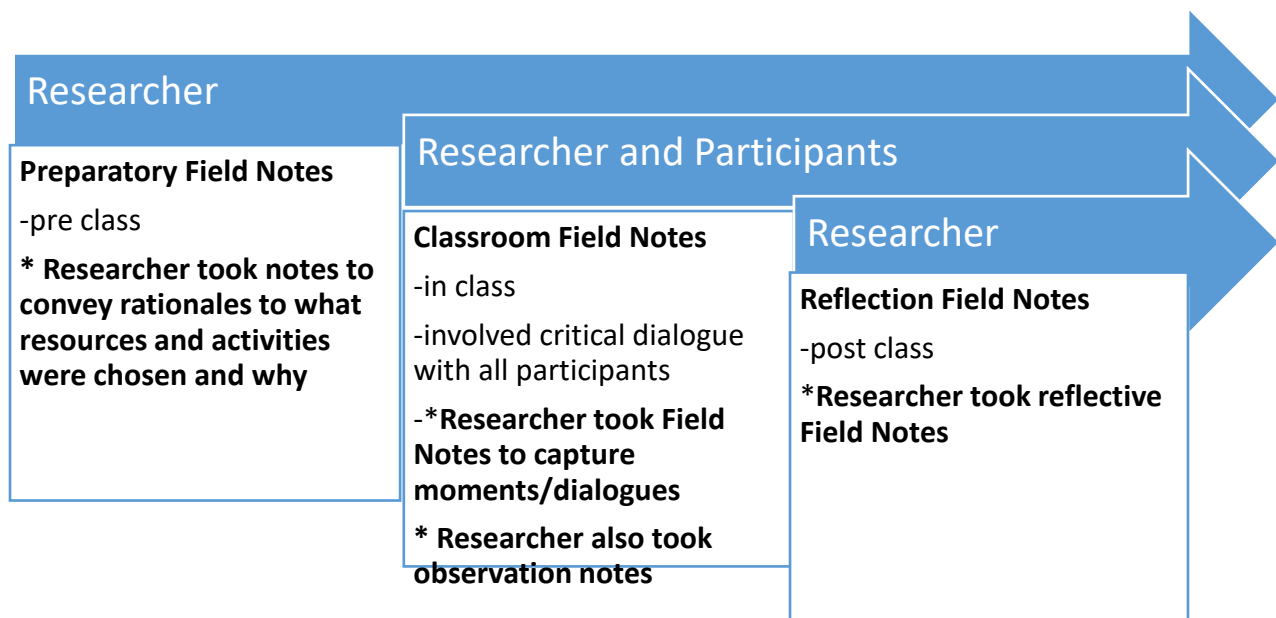
implementation of critical pedagogical approaches in an ESL class for adults with low proficiency in English, contributing to a nuanced understanding of my experiences and perspectives as teacher in this context.

Field Notes

One way to collect data in qualitative social science research is to make Field Notes. This action entails writing up scratch notes and journals with the intention to produce thoughtful recordings of meaningful data (Allen, 2017). There were three types of Field Notes in this 7-week research study: preparatory, classroom, and reflection Field Notes.

Figure 2

Three Phases of Field Notes



Preparatory notes involved me, the researcher, journaling the thought processes I had in the planning of classroom discourses. I took these notes before class to explain why I chose a particular resource, and how it might be problematic (or not) in a critical pedagogical framework.

Classroom Field Notes were documentations of interactions that occurred in-the-moment during class time. They entailed me, the researcher, jotting down notes on student input and observed behaviours. For the first one, Field Notes captured collaborative discussions among student participants and me. I wrote down the probing questions I had asked, and what students said in response to those questions. For the latter, I wrote my own critical observations of what was taking place. At times, my observations were shared and expanded on with student participants when time and situation permitted, but in some instances, they were kept private. These decisions were informed using my professional judgement and discretion.

Reflection Field Notes were completed by me after class. This was a reflective journal documenting how the day's events unfolded. In my reflection Field Notes, I considered how activities, classroom discussions, and my observations interacted with critical pedagogical thinking, or more importantly, how they did not. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the basic tenets of the process of writing my Field Notes.

It is important to note that reflection Field Notes were influenced by problem-posing (Freire, 1970) and practitioner inquiry (Rutten, 2021) questioning methods. I aimed to understand participants' perspectives and assess how the classroom supported a critical pedagogical approach. When possible, I adjusted lessons with keen attentiveness to encourage a reconsideration of criticality in the classroom. Further discussion on how student engagement as it was experienced in the research will be reviewed later on in this chapter.

Flexibility to gather classroom Field Notes involved some degree of opportunism. This meant, at times, gathering data when attendance was good, or when interpreters were available. On occasion, I was able to organize times when staff or higher-proficiency students visited the classroom to assist student participants using their first language (L1). These interpreters were

invited to our class for the primary purpose of supporting student participants understand classroom interactions, which was used for my research. This assistance was available from two Somali-speaking staff members, and a few students from the LINC 4/5 class who spoke Somali, Vietnamese, Tamil, Albanian, and Amharic. I organized this by briefly explaining my research and asking them, with their teacher's permission (where applicable), to join our class for an hour or two during some research-related activities. Volunteer interpreters were instructed to communicate in English the ideas and beliefs student participants had without imposing their own ideas and interpretations. These opportunities were held three to four times during this research and my notes indicate when volunteer interpreters were present.

This form of documentation was chosen because it provided me an opportunity to easily note things and because during the classroom phase, it was less invasive than audio or video recordings; I did not want student participants to feel reluctant to be themselves. Students in my LINC class had low English proficiency and, because of that, I was mindful of less intrusive ways to record my data. Student participants came from backgrounds that are often not academically supported, and in some incidences, the students themselves were non-literate. They had limited awareness of how research is conducted in academia and how documentation gets used. Although student participants were clearly informed of the intent and purpose of what I was doing, and that their contributions would be anonymous and solely for the purpose of my research, I was concerned that awareness of audio or video recording would likely exacerbate their fears of having concrete evidence of what they had said. Furthermore, I was mindful of the unequal relationship between me and the students; my white identity and its implications in a colonizer/colonized framework, and my authoritative role in the classroom. For these reasons, I chose a method of recording that was unobtrusive as possible. Research suggests that vulnerable

participants require more rigorous ethical considerations than others, and I contend that the language level and non-academic background of this class reflects this perspective (Rapley, 2018).

During classroom time, deciding what to record in-the-moment entailed careful consideration because this was done entirely in note form. As the instructor/researcher, I was concurrently performing both roles and unlike audio and video recordings, this circumstance required selective output. I developed four strategies to help guide me on what to record. The considerations encompassed attention to emotions, ideological discrepancies, contradictions, and power dynamics. Each of these aspects is outlined below.

First, I used Benesch's (2012) theory of how emotions can impact the classroom. One of the benefits of considering emotions is the "small and subtle shifts in perception or understanding that in themselves signal change and might cumulatively lead to further change" (Benesch, 2012, p. 52). I paid particular attention to negative emotions by way of spoken words or the use of body language. These occasions sometimes interrupted activities for the purpose of clarity and understandings or were noted discretely, decided by my professional judgement and/or sensitive nature of the interaction. Secondly, I focused on ideological discrepancies that related to the activities, policies, or dynamics in the classroom. If student participants expressed disapproval or disagreement of happenings in the classroom (such as completing classroom activities and participating in class discussions), I recorded these interactions. This included closely observing body language, sudden unexpected quietness in the class, abrupt discussions in students' L1, and expressions of frustration in English. Thirdly, I made notes when there were contradictions among participants in terms of what was being presented in the classroom (for example, contradictions in how/what topics were taught or in attendance expectations). This

included noting cultural differences and accommodating the needs of student participants. Lastly, I made notes of the power dynamics that occurred in the classroom with regard to my role, student interactions, and physical spaces. At times, these moments were negotiated and discussed collectively with participants and at other times, I quietly noted them; they were contingent on circumstances. These considerations guided me in the arduous task of documenting my research throughout its duration.

Demographic Survey of Student Participants

At the beginning of the research study, I conducted a demographic survey with student participants (See Appendix B: Student Participant Information Form). They took this form home to fill out with friends and family members who could better understand the elicited information. The survey captured key details about the participants, providing a comprehensive overview of their backgrounds. It included questions on the country of origin, arrival in Canada, age, living arrangements, presence of children, educational and employment background and languages spoken. This data provided a vivid picture of the diverse participant profiles, which are presented in the section on Student Participants. This survey served to shed light on students' cultural and familial contexts and contributed to a better understanding of the factors that impact student participants' lives.

Documents

The documents I examined as a part of this study consisted of the attendance policy, classroom resources, questionnaires, and researcher-developed materials. I used these items to support classroom activities, and then used my Field Notes to critically reflect on the interactions that occurred between myself and the students, and the activities, the materials, and the policies.

Attendance Policy and Records

LINC funding is contingent on adhering to the expectations outlined in contribution agreements. There was one criterion of this expectation that was examined in this research: the attendance policy ([See Appendix A: Program Attendance Policy](#)). I chose to review this policy because throughout my teaching career in LINC, the attendance policy has been a contentious issue for students, instructors, and program administrators. It was researched as a point-of-interest throughout the term of this research study and near the end of the course in a guided discussion.

I also reviewed attendance records to assess the impact of the policy on students' behaviour. I then used my understandings to cultivate discussions with student participants, and I reported on my observations of the discussions in my Field Notes. Table 8 captures a snapshot of attendance records within the seven-week study.

Table 1*Student Participants & Attendance*

Participant #	Participant pseudonym	Country of origin	Languages	Attendance during the study (%)	Reasons given for absences
1	Ahlam	Ethiopia	Oromo Ahmaric	2.08	Mental health
2	Asha	Somalia	Somali	58.33	Family
3	Dah eh	Burma	Karen	45.83	Health & family
4	Farhia	Somalia	Somali	100	N/A
5	Halima	Somalia	Somali	100	N/A
6	Jampel	Tibet (China)	Tibetan, Hindi	66.67	Health & family
7	Nuh	Somalia	Somali, Swahili	79.17	Appointments
8	Nuro	Somalia	Somali	75	Health & family
9	Roda	Djibouti	Somali, French	91.67	N/A
10	Sadia	Somalia	Somali	100	N/A
11	Sahro	Somalia	Somali	50	N/A
12	Sharif	Somalia	Somali	16.67	Job (on-call food delivery)
13	Sutha	Sri Lanka	Tamil	25	Very sick pregnancy
14	Thao	Vietnam	Vietnamese	91.67	N/A
15	Xheva	Albania	Albanian	66.67	Dentist
16	Zahra	Somalia	Somali	100	N/A

Attendance records during this 7-week period fell significantly below government expectations. Overall, student attendance rates stood at 50%, with 16 attendees (excluding late

arrivals and early departures). This figure falls short of the government's 70% attendance expectation and the minimum requirement of 20 seats, as per my understanding.

Classroom Resources: LINC Classroom Activities (2009) and On Target (Mitra, 1998).

Two principal texts were used in this research study to explore how adult ESL programming is realized in the classroom. They were chosen because of their importance in adult ESL programming. However, these texts were not primary sources of collected data; rather, they were used to frame how my critical pedagogical approaches were experienced in the classroom by participants. The principal data that was derived from critical considerations, classroom conversations, researcher observations, and critical reflections I had made while using these various texts was recorded in my Field Notes.

LINC Classroom Activities (2009)³ is a teaching resource that I used to support the classroom activities I conducted in this study. It is a teaching resource provided at no cost to instructors at the centre. Development of this document was funded by the federal government and aligns with LINC levels and the *CLB*. The book is thematically organized in accordance with the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) and is easy to follow for instructors with detailed instructor notes for each activity. I chose to include this teaching resource because of its accessibility and usefulness in all LINC programs.

Two themes outlined in this resource were chosen for this research: *Canadian Culture* and *Canadian Law*. The first topic was chosen because I was intrigued with learning about its relationship to a critical pedagogical approach and the latter topic was chosen by student

³ Please refer to Watson (2009) in the reference list for the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) citations throughout this paper.

participants in a needs assessment. Initially, the materials were presented to student participants ‘as they were,’ and through problem-posing strategies, participants re-constructed the knowledge presented in the texts. This process “strives for the *emergence of consciousness and critical intervention* in reality” (Freire, 1970, p. 81) or in other words, it allows participants to engage in and *question* the knowledge they are being taught. Data collected represents the critical and non-critical engagements experienced in using this text and is reflected my Field Notes.

A specific teacher resource that was used involved assessing students’ language proficiency. Similar to the previous resource, I administered the document, *On Target* (Mitra, 1998) as instructed by the instructional guide to teachers. This resource was chosen because it represented a reliable method of assessing students in LINC and was used by all instructors in our program. Field Notes captured my observations and reflections on administering an assessment with this resource as well as the discussions that ensued after the task was completed.

Questionnaires

I developed several in-class questionnaire activities. Two of them were needs assessments (See Appendix C: Sample Needs Assessments). The intention of using these tools was to determine if the topics students wanted to learn about aligned with the texts and resources that were available. Similar to other data sources mentioned in this section, having students complete these questionnaires prompted discussions from which I took Field Notes. The data (responses in the questionnaire and through discussions) provided information on the learning gaps from students’ perspectives and program resources.

Another questionnaire I developed focused on using L1 in the classroom (See Appendix D: Participant Questionnaire on L1 in the Classroom), which during the dialogic process of administering this questionnaire, was expanded on by student participants. The use of L1 has

been a contentious issue for ESL educators (Auerbach, 1993), and this questionnaire was constructed to gain perspective from student participants. It was drafted with this intent in mind and in consideration of how student participants understood the role of L1 in the classroom. This questionnaire draws on Canagarajah's (2005) guiding critical pedagogy definition of how learning should be situated to consider egalitarian environments and thus, provided student participants an opportunity to share their thoughts on the topic.

In the spirit of applying a critical approach to using L1 in the classroom, I invited students to share their thoughts and ideas on this problem-posing inspired questionnaire. After spending some time in class going over the questions, the non-Somali participants took the questions home and answered them with the help of family and friends and other translation devices (such as a dictionary and the Internet). This entailed 3 participants who spoke Tamil, Vietnamese, and Albanian. In retrospect, it could have been advantageous to translate the questionnaires into participants' first language (L1) to enhance comprehensibility. However, despite this consideration, the questionnaires were returned with responses that were reasonably comprehensive. The three students promptly filled out and returned the questionnaires the following day.

In contrast, the seven Somali students present during the session decided to utilize class time collectively to respond to the questions, with the assistance of a Somali-speaking staff member. Meanwhile, the three non-Somali students focused on other class-related tasks during this period. I participated by listening and clarifying some of the things Somali-speaking participants were confused about and recording their answers by hand. During this activity, Somali participants decided to expand the questionnaire with two additional questions.

Researcher Developed Materials – Problem-posing.

A teaching resource I developed models a problem-posing technique depicted in Wallerstein and Auerbach's (2004) work. This activity utilized a picture to elicit questioning. Questioning is a tactic that encourages dialogue whereby the teacher prompts discussion by asking open-ended questions. Questions center on what is happening in the picture and ascertaining how the people in the picture may feel. This strategy allowed participants to share their perspectives and invites collaborative dialogues amongst all participants. I chose to develop this resource for this research study because it is an established critical pedagogical approach used by Freire and other critical scholars. Once again, Field Notes documented the responses to the questions posed in these activities and the discussions that developed during this dialogic process. My reflections in the Field Notes focused on the critical discussions that transpired during and after this resource was implemented.

Classroom Memorabilia

The tangible work that was collected from my implementation of the various activities and the discussions that followed I have termed as 'Classroom Memorabilia'. These items include the results from the two needs assessment questionnaires, classroom handouts, and the picture that was used for the problem posing activity. They are referenced in subsequent chapters where applicable.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study involved examining my field notes that reflected on 7 weeks of classroom experiences related to problem-posing activities and my critical pivoting to adjust or alter the curriculum to fit critical pedagogical values. It also includes my thoughts and perspectives, as recorded in my field notes, on the classroom memorabilia produced through the learning activities as well as my review of policies, classroom texts, teacher guides, and student

reactions to researcher-developed tools. Whereever possible, student reflections and comments on the activities were also recorded in my Field notes at the end of each class. As the focus of this research study was on my role as an ESL teacher implementing critical pedagogy, I deemed it unnecessary to audiorecord student comments for later verbatim transcription; instead, I attempted to capture the gist of what students were saying in the moment, which I then later reflected on in my Field notes and subsequently analyzed. The strategies outlined above, as integral components of my AR/PAR/PI case study methodology, were employed to inform my research question. To make sense of this data, I was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of analysis, which involves thematic organization of data. This approach asks the researcher to first familiarize themselves with the data by multiple readings and reflections, before moving to code the data, then searching for, reviewing, defining, and naming themes, and finally, coherently writing up the data in reference to current scholarly trends. Table 2 presents the data phases in the analysis process.

Table 2*Phases of Thematically Analysing Data*

Data Phase	What This Entails	How I Accomplished this
Familiarizing Self with Data	Researcher immerses themselves in the data	Reading and re-reading the data, and reflecting on the experiences that took place in the classroom
Coding Data	Semantically and conceptually read the data	Determining if the data revealed critical elements or not
Searching through Data	Construct meaningful and coherent patterns	Organizing the data according to the presence or absence of critical elements
Reviewing Data	Reflect on themes and determine if they are convincing and compelling	Determining if data supported convincing and compelling critical pedagogical perspectives (or lack thereof)
Defining and Naming Data	Identify the ‘essence’ of each theme and name it (often done by questioning)	By asking: • What is the essence of the critical element(s) in each theme? • What terms would best capture the critical element(s) in each theme?
Writing Up Data	Contextualizing the data in written form and relating it to existing literature	Writing up the data and identifying its role in existing research in adult ESL programming

Note. This table is adapted from Braun & Clarke’s (2006) method of thematic analyses.

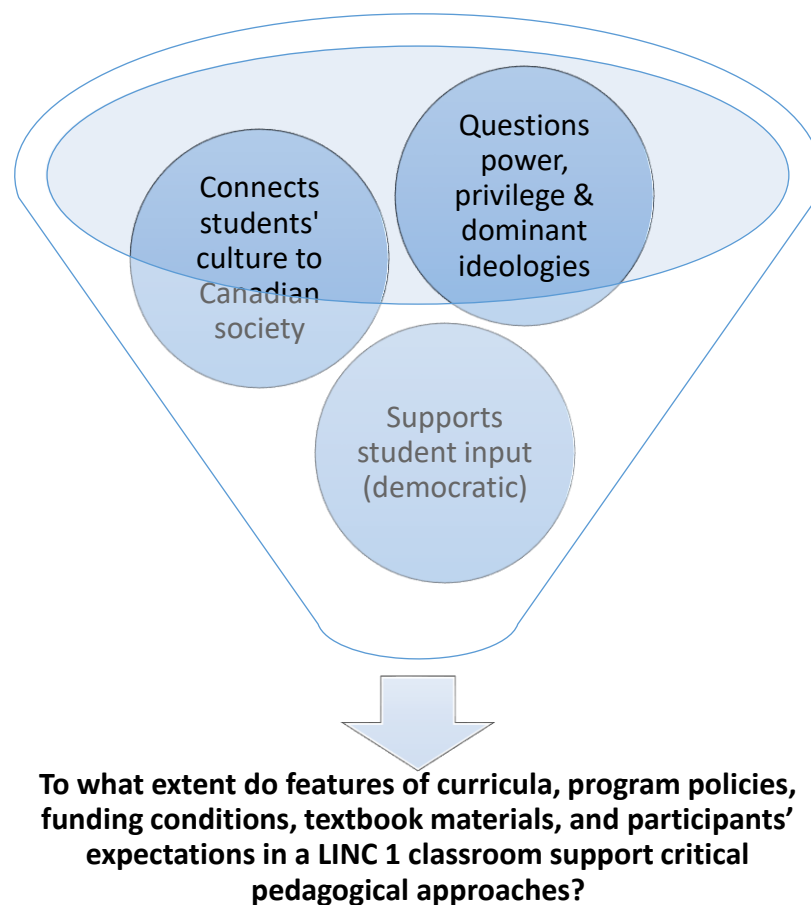
From the time the data were collected, I extensively reviewed the data and critically reflected on it. Even now, a quick glance at a field note, or a handout a student had written up takes me back to the 2013 LINC 1 class at this organization. The physical data instantly transports me back to those weeks of research and continually sparks my curiosity. It is a time in my life that is ingrained within me and with the support of the data, I can easily recall so many moments.

The task of coding the data was premised on organizing it into two broad categories based on whether the experiences in class were critical or not. I conceptually framed this

distinction by considering which critical elements were present (or absent) in the data (Canagarajah, 2005). This involved laying out the physical data and reflecting upon the principles of critical pedagogical it captured, and more importantly, what principles it did not capture. Figure 6 shows how I operationalized critical pedagogical approaches.

Figure 3

How Critical Pedagogy was Operationalized



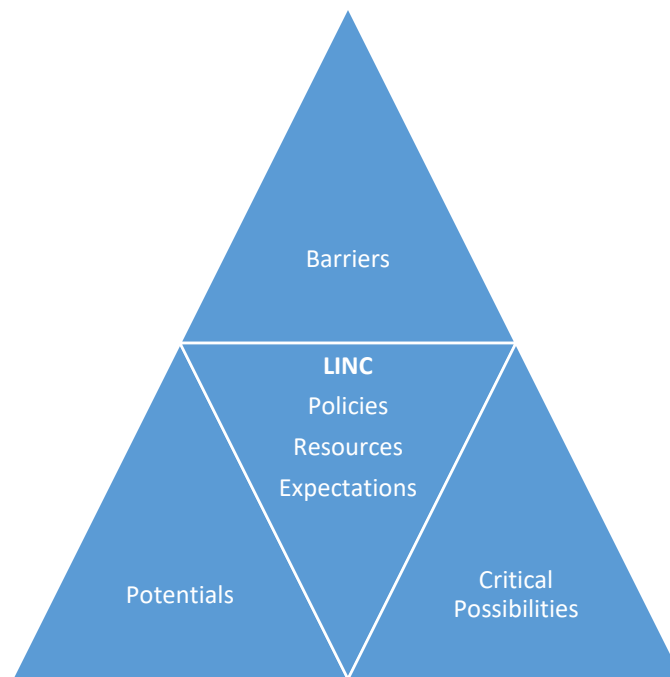
This research considered the above aspects to measure the ability to support critical pedagogical approaches. I considered how features (curricula, program policies, funding conditions, textbook materials, and participants' expectations) of the LINC classroom mitigated

social injustices by examining how power, privilege, and dominant ideologies were maintained and/or contested within this context. In addition, I explored how (or if) what we did in the classroom honoured and valued students' cultural beliefs. Lastly, I evaluated to what extent students contributed to classroom discourses, which included determining topics, teaching and learning strategies, and how program policies and expectations were navigated.

After broadly separating the data, I then identified how feasible it was to foster empowerment for students. This included considering how much time, energy, and willingness there was for participants to adopt to critical pedagogical changes. I analysed moments and activities that were documented, and asked myself questions like: "How is this empowering? What needs to be done for this to be empowering? How did students express their feelings?" From there, common patterns could be placed into categories with consideration to how my analyses measured criticality. This enabled me to construct categories of critical engagement and resulted in identifying three common themes to reflect the different degrees of how LINC programming supports critical pedagogical approaches. They are named as *barriers*, *potentials*, and *current possibilities*. Within each theme, the policies, resources, and expectations of our LINC 1 classroom were critically evaluated. Figure 7 provides a visual representation of this discussion.

Figure 4

Visualizations of Themes that Impact Critical Pedagogical Approaches



Ethical Considerations

Respecting the well-being of participants was of the greatest importance to me. I took careful consideration of the impact this research might have on participants. I considered how certain practices and approaches may cause embarrassment and/or harm on student participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I was mindful of the fact that student participants enrolled in the class were first and foremost, LINC students, not solely research participants. I took great measures to ensure that their learning was not significantly impacted by my research; I maintained classroom timetables and covered content that I would normally would.

I was also mindful of the significant language and cultural barriers between me and the student participants. I did not know the L1 of students, and their proficiency in English was at a level that made it challenging to communicate (although we were a creative class with our

gestures and facial expressions). For this reason, I encouraged students to share their concerns and ideas with those (friends and family members) who spoke their L1 and when possible, have them relay back to me in English. Additionally, at times, I recruited colleagues and higher-level students who spoke students' L1 to convey student participants' contributions to classroom discussions. The language gap involved other implications such as religion and culture. Although I had strategies in place to address these gaps, there were moments when communication was impaired, and I could only intuit what was going on. This vulnerability is reflected in my positionality, which is accounted for in various segments throughout this paper.

Validity

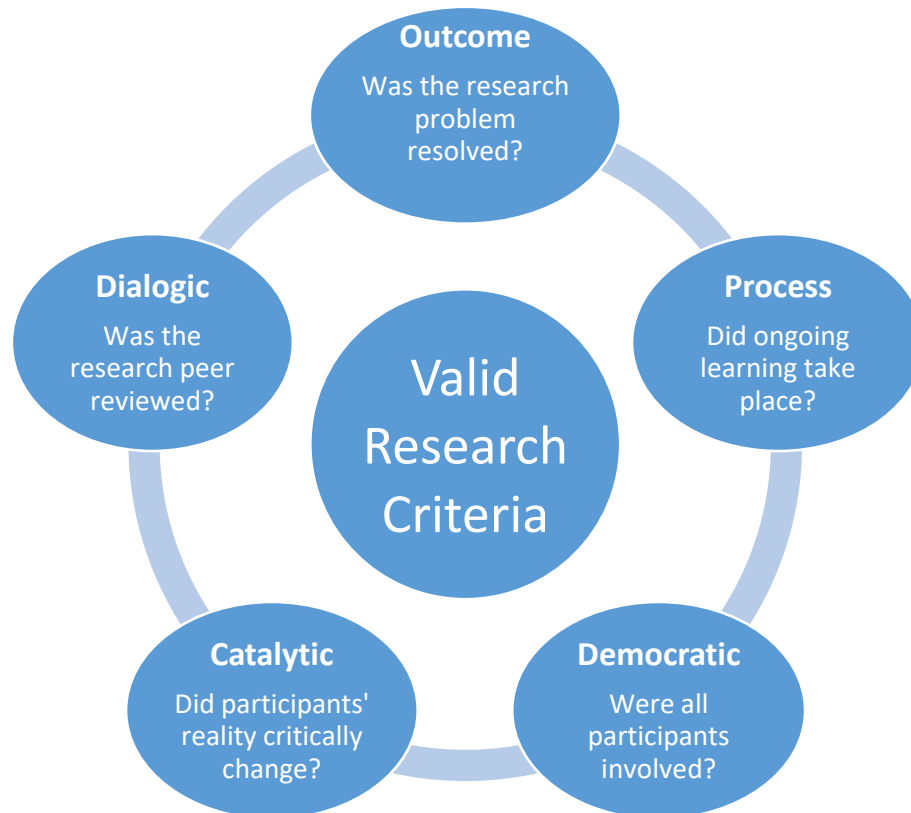
Legitimation of knowledge is explored in Lather's (2007) book, *Getting Lost* with respect to validity in qualitative research. Lather takes this issue up in postfoundational discourse theory and explores how the term, 'validity' (or rather, what is valid research) comes with a notion of positivistic epistemology. They redefine this term to account for subjectivity and embrace it rather than seeing it as a hindrance to research. I concur with their findings and further argue that although this qualitative research may deviate from traditional research methods, it is still rich with data that can improve the teaching and learning conditions in the field of adult ESL language programming in Canada.

To ensure valid data collection, I employed Herr and Anderson's (2005) validity criteria that is recognized in action research and captures my intentions and goals for my student-centered approach. This engagement recognizes the subjective and biased nature of research but offers transparency of my considerations and intentions. Coupled with my positionality, I expose my biases not to diminish the integrity of this research, but as an acknowledgement of

undeniable subjectivity. The five criteria which guided this research included outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic criteria (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Validity Criteria for Research Study



Note: Adapted from Herr & Anderson. *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. SAGE Publications

Outcome validity is concerned with whether the problems addressed in the study were resolved. In other words, were the issues I focused on in my study successfully modified? I believe that yes, they were, but only to some extent because many of the challenges of *doing* critical pedagogy in a government-funded adult ESL classroom go beyond my ability as a classroom teacher.

Process validity aims to assess if the study permits ongoing learning throughout the research process. This can be somewhat challenging in PAR because as in the circumstances of this study, I was the instructor of the class and was trying to teach the class while I was collecting the data too. In the spirit of PAR, I paid attention to the challenges I had faced and came up with creative solutions to the multiple roles I held. For example, I had asked one of the participants to copy data I was collecting that was written on the board (rather than me doing it). These were typically brainstorming activities we had done in class that related to a classroom activity. With the student's permission, I had asked them to copy word-for-word what I was writing on the board. Prior to erasing the board, I would quickly give the student's copy a glance to ensure it was copied with accuracy. I also made the choice to take notes when class time had ended rather than during class time. So, while class was in session, I would quickly jot down a few points in order to remember that moment and wrote in more detail after class time had ended. I paid a lot of attention to ensure learning was a high priority while my research was being conducted. My teaching practice deviated somewhat from what I would normally do in the classroom, but there was not a lack of learning while I was conducting this research. In fact, because I was carrying out my research, I was highly sensitive to teaching/learning processes, so there was little space for other types of distractions that can negatively affect one's teaching. Furthermore, I had interpreters on standby while I was conducting this research; I do not normally have this benefit. Having people ready and able to sit with students to explain a concept in their L1 helped student participants with their learning and understanding.

Democratic validity focuses on whether the study took on a collaborative approach with everyone involved in the study, which included me and student participants. This consideration already aligns with a PAR approach whereby all participants are encouraged to share their ideas

and knowledge. To ensure as much collaboration as possible, I used strategies to ensure all participants were 'heard' in this research. This included turn-taking approaches (each participant was asked to answer a question in a 'circle-like' format) as well as administering individual questionnaires.

Catalytic validity seeks to develop participants' understandings of their reality and with regard to this study, using a critical framework. My efforts to do this were consistent and done with a lot of passion as transforming social spaces is pertinent in a critical pedagogical approach.

Dialogic validity refers to the collaborative efforts made in a form of peer review. This dissertation has required a great deal of discussion with my supervisor and committee, which has ensured quality of the research.

Ensuring validity in qualitative research is often supported by triangulating data. This method includes using a variety of resources or approaches to establish credibility of the research (Salkind, 2010). Although triangulating data can include gathering different stakeholders' viewpoints (Heigham & Croker, 2009), the spirit of my study was to collect information guided by student participants' voices and my understandings of critical pedagogical approaches. Rather, my method of triangulation deviates from traditional understandings of triangulation and focuses on utilizing various resources and teaching approaches for critical examination. This was strategically arranged because my goal was to center this study on students' voices and my critical engagement with them. As a result, exploring critical pedagogy was triangulated primarily on how a variety of policies, teacher resources, and participants' expectations were experienced in the classroom. More specifically, triangulation was utilized by carrying out *doing* critical and non-critical classroom practices in the classroom, adhering (or not adhering to) the attendance policy set out by the program and federal government, and having

critical discussion with participants to gain a better understanding of what their educational beliefs are about teaching and learning adult ESL (or education in a general sense).

This study draws on a small sample of newcomers who attend government-funded ESL programs. Moreover, I am the only instructor and researcher who participated in this research. For these reasons, the study's findings may not be significant to other programs that operate in rural areas or have different immigrant demographics. However, it is important to consider Mills' (1959) sociological conceptualization that private issues are rooted in public discourses. This concept supports an idea that a small study like this can be widely relatable to a broader context.

Limitations

A key criticism to qualitative singular case studies similar to this research study is that it is case-specific and perhaps, not relevant to a wider context (Duff, 2008). While this should be acknowledged, it is also important to note that the experiences shared and presented in this research study by way of in-depth understandings meaningfully contribute to what we know about adult ESL programming. This research purposefully draws on ESL teaching and learning by immersing in the classroom and using critical pedagogical approaches to gain perspectives that otherwise could not be realized in quantitative work. To address this criticism, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) were provided in this chapter to help readers decide on the relevancy this research has within broader adult ESL teaching and learning contexts.

Another limitation this research study has is although this research study draws on sharing the voices of student participants in this LINC 1 class, the data is guided by my interpretation and reflection of events. I used problem-posing questioning as a key method to gain student participants' perspectives, yet their responses were filtered through *me* and how *I*

interpreted their responses. While I was inspired by the rich insights shared by student participants, it is crucial for readers of this research study to be mindful that the data used in this study draws on the voices of students throughout this 7-week period as shaped and reflected upon by me, the researcher, and these reflections are documented to align with my research focus.

Another limitation to this study concerns the notion of empowering. As the teacher and researcher in this study, my goal was to best explain how I attempted to critically transform adult ESL teaching and learning. However, as Haque (2007) notes, the knowledge of empowerment connotes a subjective interpretation. For this reason, I included my positionality and elucidated my research process with rigorous details to illuminate not only my subjective ideals but also to best convey the subjective ideals of the students. However, what I see as empowering may not always be what is empowering to others or within an adult ESL learning setting.

Attempting to conduct research with participants who have low proficiency in English was extremely challenging and frustrating at times (for them and me). I took great lengths to ensure that students understood what I was doing, why I was doing it, and how I was doing it, but nevertheless, there was a risk of misunderstanding. To address this, I invited students to take home and share our content with their friends and family members. I encouraged their acquaintances to contact me with any questions or concerns. I also recruited language support from work colleagues and higher-level students to assist with interpretations from student participants' L1 to English. The limitation of this approach, however, is that due to lack of funding, I could not bring in qualified, professional interpreters. Thus, the information that came through my volunteer interpreters may not accurately reflect the authentic experiences of the student.

The sources of data also serve as a limitation in this study, as teacher-researcher Field Notes were the primary source of information. As the scope of my research study focused on my personal experiences and perspectives as an ESL teacher, and not on student perspectives or critical analyses of program operations, I felt it was out of scope to incorporate other primary data sources, although I did utilize secondary sources of data, such as various policies, classroom resources, questionnaires to consider student needs and interests, and researcher-developed materials to frame the development of classroom activities and promote critical discussion, which I then reflected upon in my Field Notes. Because I did not record classroom interactions, my data analysis was dependent on my Field Notes for recollections of what occurred and which student made comments. Therefore, in my discussions of findings, I was unable to attribute comments to specific student participants. Inclusion of more robust methods of data collection, such as extensive document reviews, classroom recordings, and in-depth student participant interviews would allow for triangulation to enhance the credibility of my own assumptions and interpretations and provide a richer, deeper description of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of incorporating critical action research in an ESL classroom.

Another notable limitation of this study pertains to the extended duration taken for the composition of the dissertation. This can potentially introduce certain challenges and drawbacks to the study's overall execution. The unforeseen delays in completing the dissertation in a timely manner could have hindered the integration of more recent literature or developments in the field. While every effort was made to mitigate these effects, the extended duration of dissertation writing remains a noteworthy limitation to consider in evaluating the study's outcomes and implications.

Government funding has always been a concern in our program, and I did not want to document anything that would compromise our program's funding. I also did not want to risk my job by sharing information that could compromise the integrity of my workplace. In the interest of maintaining peace within the organization, I was not able to incorporate findings that I felt might be controversial and not acceptable to organization administrators.

Lastly, although I feel that I am well-educated, empathetic, and knowledgeable, my absence of personal experience of immigrating to a new country impacts this research. As someone who was born in Canada and has not experienced what it is like to move to a new country where a language I do not know is spoken, my relatability to the students' experiences is lacking, an issue that emerges in my data analyses.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter provides an overview of my findings. It discusses the experiences and perspectives of my implementation of critical pedagogical approaches in a LINC classroom with the premise that critical pedagogical approaches may be beneficial. My experiences highlighted barriers, potentials, and critical possibilities that impacted my use of a critical pedagogical approach in teaching adult ESL programming to students with a low level of English proficiency.

Thematic Findings

This section expands on the three themes that emerged from the data in this research study. Within each theme, critical analyses on policies, resources, and expectations are presented. *Barriers* represent aspects of ESL programming that significantly undermine critical pedagogy and student transformation. *Potentials* reflect traces of critical pedagogy within the program. These are discussed cautiously because of the time and effort required to critically implement them in the classroom. Lastly, *Critical Possibilities* present aspects of the program that allow opportunities for critical pedagogy in the classroom. Each theme ends with a summative reflection, which aims to synthesize how critical pedagogical approaches were experienced in the classroom within these themes and discusses its broader implications in adult ESL education.

Barriers

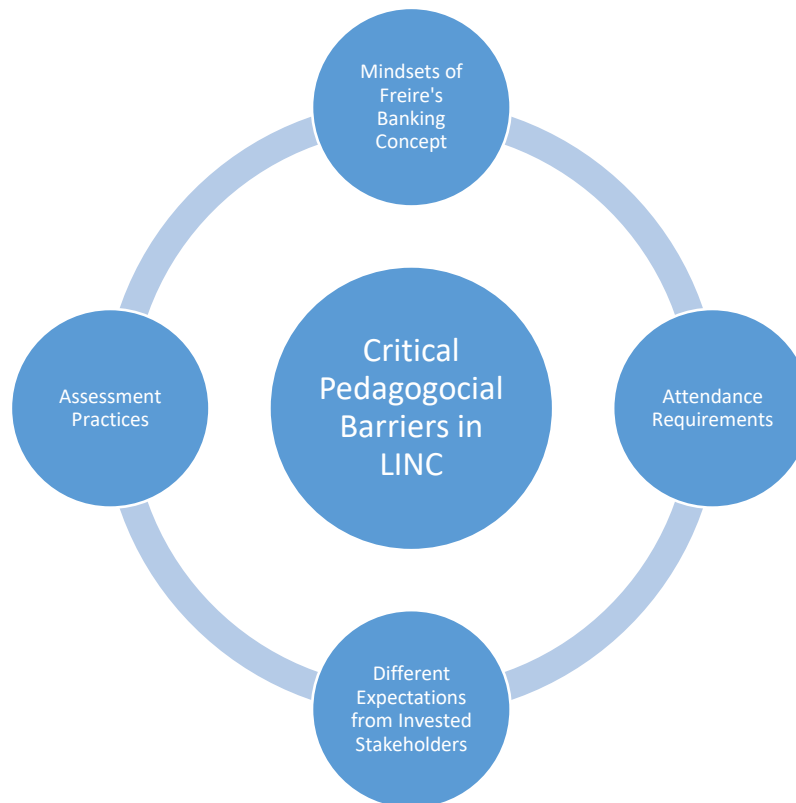
~The Glass is Half Empty~

The primary goal of adopting critical pedagogical approaches is to transform teaching and learning to reflect more democratic, equitable, and ethical practices with the intention to have these ideas filter into broader social spaces (Canagarajah, 2005). The data suggests that there are four key areas that hinder doing critical work in LINC classrooms: notions of Freire's (1970) banking model of education; participants' adherence to the attendance policy;

discrepancies in program expectations from invested stakeholders; and participants' frustrations on completing assessment practices. Figure 8 presents a graphic of key critical pedagogical barriers in LINC.

Figure 6

Overview of Key Critical Pedagogical Barriers in LINC



Barrier #1: Banking Concept of Education within Mindsets and Resources

The data shows that there is evidence in LINC programming of what Freire (1970) calls, “the banking concept of education” (p. 72), which contradicts critical and empowering approaches to teaching and learning. The banking concept of education suggests:

- (a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- (b) The teacher knows everything and the student knows nothing;
- (c) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;

- (d) The teacher talks and the students listen meekly;
 - (e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
 - (f) The teacher chooses and enforces his [their] choices, and the students comply;
 - (g) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
 - (h) The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
 - (i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority of knowledge, which he or she sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
 - (j) The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.
- (Freire, 1970, p. 73)

This concept was exhibited in two crucial ways; in the expressed mindsets of participants and in the resource, *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009).

The Mindset of the Banking Model of Education.

Banking education facilitates teacher-dominant discourses in the classroom whereas problem-posing approaches provoke collaborative ways to gain knowledge of the world (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) maintains that “[k]nowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). There is no doubt that these emotions were felt by all participants, and the expression of these emotions were indicative of their mindset towards their preferred approach to teaching. Some of the emotions expressed by the student participants included “Teacher, *I* am not teacher!”, “Do we really have choices? [We

need to] learn whatever teacher teaches”, and “What right do we have to say we don’t like it?” (Field Notes, May 22).

In a problem-posing framework, knowledge is gained by dialogue and contrary to the banking education model, developed by *all* participants. The activities I implemented were designed to explore the beliefs the student participants held on teaching approaches and the opportunities (or lack thereof) to deviate from banking models of education. An example of one such activity was during a reflective discussion we had while discussing the use of L1 in the classroom. The comments I heard during the discussion of this activity included “What [the] teacher says, goes”, “Teacher is like a ‘mother’. [It is the] teacher’s responsibility how we behave and what we study”, and “A student is a student [and] should act like a student” (Field Notes, May 16). This interaction with student participants demonstrates that the banking model of education is prevalent in LINC, which I believe, based on my experience in this study, hinders the implementation of critical pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Student participants preferred ideas and circumstances of teaching reinforced dominant discourses, such as Freire’s (1970) banking model of education, which resulted in challenges to implement collaborative knowledge-sharing. These challenges are discussed below from student participants’ viewpoints and through my own lens.

Students’ Educational Expectations and Mindset

Through problem-posing discussions, student participants shared their knowledge and understanding of what teaching and learning should look like. For example, they referred to me as a mother figure in the class, who should tell them how to act and behave (Field Notes, May 15, May 21). In another instance, students were adamant about copying down everything I had written on the whiteboard, even if it was simply a brainstorming activity (Field Notes, June 10).

These discussions and interactions indicate that banking approaches to education are what students expect and want in the classroom. This preference for banking models of education left me in a state of uncertainty. For example, when student participants and I had discussions about citizenship, I wanted to encourage active engagement with citizenship. Yet, they indicated a preference for learning remote facts to pass the citizenship test was what was important to them (Field Notes, May 13). I wanted to honour their vision of education and their knowledge of how they see the world, yet their beliefs about education blatantly contradicted critical pedagogical objectives because the student participants idealized the banking model of education. In particular, this preference became quite clear in the reflective discussion we had about introducing birthday celebrations into the classroom because, regardless of what they thought of birthdays (in favour of or against), student participants noted that it was *my* decision whether to teach it or not (Field Notes, May 22). There was an eerie expectation that I, the teacher, should be the one to choose and enforce learning practices, and students' roles were to listen and be compliant with whatever I decided to teach. After all, as one participant articulated, I was regarded as their “mother who knew best”. Comments similar to this were made throughout the study whereby student participants expressed their desire to leave the content and topics of learning in my capable hands. Here are a few of those comments that I recorded in my Field Notes from May 15 that demonstrate student participants' desire for the banking model approach:

- “What [the] teacher says, goes”
- “[A] student is [a] student and should act like [a] student”
- “Teacher is like a ‘mother’”
- “Teacher’s responsibility to expect how [students should] behave and what [to] study”

The established hierarchies that exist in education in much of the world were transparent in this research and simply do not disappear in a two-month study. Students' perceptions of my authority role compromised the goals and objectives set out in this study and created a lot of dissonance in me. I noted that I found it challenging to conduct needs assessments, which guide teachers in choosing topics, and I felt that activities that promoted student input were met with resistance through comments such as those mentioned above. Students expressed beliefs that suggested I, the teacher, was in charge of the classroom. Furthermore, there were discussions that suggested my role should be conducted in an authoritative manner. For example, I was told it was my job to determine what content I should teach students and tell students how they should behave in the classroom (Field Notes, May 15). Students often conveyed that they did not think they should have a lot of power in determining what I chose to teach in our class. For some, their mentality was expressed as, “shut up and do what you’re told” and “just listen to the teacher” (Field Notes, May 22). In addition, I observed that activities that received the most student interest were lessons that involved pre-determined handouts, regardless of the content. For example, despite the controversy over birthdays (to be discussed later), student participants appeared keen to complete the worksheet I had handed out from the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book. Handouts were generally regarded as ‘real’ learning and students displayed a conscious effort to complete them. In contrast, the discussions and lessons conducted through a more critical pedagogical approach did not provoke the same commitment from students. From what I had observed, they seemed less engaged in completing the tasks as in the problem-posing activity we did about a child’s education where I had recorded a lack of engagement (Field Notes, June 4).

My Own Educational Expectations and Mindset

The critical pedagogical knowledge I gained came during my graduate studies. Prior to that, there was no focus on critical pedagogy in my undergrad and Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) teaching courses. This study focuses on implementing critical strategies that followed my TESL training, and professional development at TESL Ontario conferences, yet it is important to highlight my trajectory of carrying out critical work because of its absence in standard training and its implications in this study.

With the knowledge of CP from my post-graduate courses, I was able to implement diverse ways of *doing* critical pedagogy in this classroom: namely problem-posing and critical pivoting. These two approaches uncovered different ways to gain and share knowledge. Freire (1970) notes that problem-posing allows for knowledge of the world to be developed by both students and teachers. These strategies were not taught in my TESL training, nor did I experience problem posing and critical pivoting in my own educational experiences growing up in Canada.

During this study, I was hyper-focused on exploring my own teaching practices and my reflections revealed that my role as a teacher naturally gravitated to the banking model of education. For example, much of my time was spent standing at the front of the class talking while students sat at their tables. Although I wanted to be mindful of the power dynamics, I noted it was ‘easier’ to take opportunities to stand in front of the classroom to teach, explain, and discuss concepts. These sentiments were also present in the available and required resources of the program. For example, when I used the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) handouts on birthday celebrations, I mainly stood in front of the class for this lesson (Field Notes, May 22). These sentiments were also substantiated by the expectations that students had of me, their

teacher. It was simply easier to gear my teaching to a banking model, rather than explore unprecedented critical pedagogical approaches.

The Banking Model in Teaching Resources: LINC Classroom Activities (2009)

Language learning is a social construct (Vygotsky, 1978), which subsequently places a huge responsibility on adult ESL programming and the resources it encompasses. The *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) and *CLB* (2012) are based on competency-based “demonstrable application of knowledge and skills by individual learners” (*Canadian Language Benchmarks*, p. IX, 2012). The standard skills and knowledge required are presented in resources developed for programs like LINC, and they are further regulated in documents that outline particular abilities and knowledge(s) (*Canadian Language Benchmarks*, 2012; *LINC Curriculum Guidelines*, 2002). This complex, necessary, and intertwined expectation in LINC steered me to use ready-made texts to guide the learning and teaching in the classroom. Readily available teaching resources have been a source of reliance for other teachers as well (Haque & Cray, 2007).

The instructions and content in the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book are guided by traditional banking notions of learning and teaching whereby knowledge is presented in a manner that bestows authority in the classroom. The teaching resource used in this study, *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) was chosen because of its direct connection to LINC program expectations and also, because of its ease of access and use (legally photocopiable, free, and aligned to the curriculum). When put to practice, the findings show how this material reinforces the status quo of the banking model and allows for limited opportunities to engage in critical learning and teaching. There were two themes from this resource that were used in this study: “Canadian Culture” and “Canadian Law”.

The theme of “Canadian Culture” involved content on birthdays and celebrations. During this lesson, I attempted to use the resource ‘as is’ without critical interference. On this day (Field Notes, May 22), there were only 2 non-Somali speaking students present and 6 students who spoke Somali. It was not a topic chosen by students in their needs’ assessment. Rather, I chose it because it was a topic covered in LINC content and focused on a contentious issue: culture. However, as the lesson progressed, it became apparent that the content and instructions provided in the text provided little opportunity for critical engagement and knowledge sharing.

Almost immediately into the lesson, a passionate discussion erupted on the content of the lesson (Field Notes, May 22). The activity we were doing required students do a warm-up activity to discuss how (not *if*) they celebrated their birthday and was followed up with a handout that invited them to go around the classroom and share their birth dates. I noted that many student participants were visibly upset; specifically, I observed that L1 was uncharacteristically being used amongst Somali participants, while the other non-Somali student participants either sat quietly or spoke in English to a neighbouring student. I used the term “muttered” in my Field Notes for that day to reflect how they were speaking to each other. Many student participants appeared frustrated and annoyed, and there was an obvious tension in the air. At this point, I added some problem-posing questions in order to better understand the obvious tension. I asked students questions about birthdays: “Why don’t you celebrate your birthday?”; “How do you celebrate this day with your kids?”; and “How do your kids feel about birthdays?”. These questions were framed in a way not to judge, but to seek better understandings.

After some discussion, it became evident that the concepts of celebrate and birthdays did not always go hand-in-hand among student participants. The main reasons for the tensions among Somali students related to a huge divide in *if* birthdays should be something people

should celebrate and if they do, the implications of that celebration. Furthermore, the sole Albanian participant proudly shared similar birthday celebrations that were consistent with common Canadian ones. He did not understand why others could not adapt to a seemingly fun celebration. This sentiment was agreed upon by the only Vietnamese participant who said she felt “happy” to learn about how Canadians celebrate because it would help her understand more about Canada, which would make her more confident and help her with her future of being Canadian. The problem-posing questions were not part of the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) protocol, but instead, they provided us the opportunity to reflect on bigger issues on this topic.

Later, I learned that many Somali people do not celebrate their birthday for religious and cultural reasons (Field Notes, May 22). My Field Notes from May 22 reveal much discussion around the topic of birthdays. One student said, there is too much fighting going on in the country to worry about birthdays. A few Somali students indicated that they did not know their birthday because it was not important to them. One student mentioned that she had her identification documented as ‘January 1st’ because she did not know her actual birthday (others nodded that this was common practice back home in Somalia). One Somali student shared how her children wanted to celebrate their birthday “like everyone else” (flowers, cake, cards) and with that, another student expressed that this was wrong, and she should avoid raising her children this way because she is “Somali.” The student who commented about celebrating birthdays seemed indifferent to this response and stated it did not matter to her, but her children wanted to “fit in.” These comments reflected the diversity of opinions and perspectives on the role of learning about their new country’s culture and rituals.

I carried on with the activity a little bit further as instructed in the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) and its accompanying handout (pp. 121-123) (See Appendix G: *LINC*

Classroom Activities (2009) pp. 121-123). A couple of students were showing signs of disengagement. One student was advised by another classmate to stop saying reasons why he does not celebrate and to simply provide his birth date for the activity. In my Field Notes (May 22), I wrote that another student was, “totally not motivated” and ultimately, I chose to end the lesson with the first (of nine) handouts I had photocopied and prepared to instruct from this topic.

This topic proved to be very contentious, and many participants assumed that people like them (immigrants) should adapt to the new culture, yet a few Somali participants contested this notion because they felt it deprived them of their own cultural beliefs. As a follow-up from this activity, two problem-posing questions I asked were, “What do you think about what you are learning? Does this lesson matter to you?” (Field Notes, May 22). A Somali participant expressed, “what right do we have to say we don’t like it [topic of birthdays]?” Other Somali participants nodded in agreement with this statement. The Vietnamese participant expressed, “Do we really have choices? [We need to] learn whatever [the] teacher teaches.” At this point, it was noticeably clear that this topic was a touchy subject amongst the majority of Somali participants who felt that celebrating birthdays was an important thing to do to successfully integrate their family into Canadian society versus a behaviour that robbed them of their Somali identity. It was also evidence that the expectation from the resource we used was that students should embrace Canadian notions of birthdays as a cultural practice.

I chose to end this topic after our discussion because the next handout involved asking classmates about sending birthday cards, giving birthday presents, eating birthday cake, and doing birthday parties for their children. It did not seem appropriate to continue down this path. I experienced a sense of discomfort. I instantly went from being a teacher who used to bring

monthly cakes to school to celebrate those who had birthdays in that particular month to one who chose to brush off the topic in the future. It did not feel right to present this topic in class knowing what I now knew. I decided from that point on to consciously not make a big deal out of birthdays and to honour only those who brought it up in class on their terms. I became more mindful of what this topic meant to many immigrants who came to Canada, I and did not want to continue to embrace birthday celebrations as if they were a cultural expectation in Canada. I also contended that if a community like the demographics of Somalis in our class disagreed on the topic, they could negotiate these topics in spaces outside of the classroom. If I did make space for this topic in the classroom, I would approach it more critically and ensure *everyone's* opinion was validated.

In my reflection notes on May 22, I pondered several questions. *How can immigrants such as some of the Somali students in this research politely inform others that they do not celebrate birthdays and communicate to others that it is ok? How can I teach them [students] language skills without ethnocentric influences? Why are birthdays such a big deal anyway and why do they have to be in the [LINC Curriculum] Guidelines and other resources? What are better ways to teach months and numbers?* My reflections on this experience left me wondering how this knowledge of birthdays in Canada (that is, if we accept the content to represent our culture in Canada) help students learn and integrate into Canadian society. I was left wondering if lessons on birthdays and celebrations should have spaces in adult ESL resources and if they did, how they could best support shared ideologies.

The second theme, “Canadian Law” also confirmed that content of the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) reflected banking concepts (See Appendix H: *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) pp. 162-164). Although student participants chose the topic of “Policing” in their needs’

assessment, problem-posing discussions following the handout showed that content about stolen bikes, driving a car, and noisy neighbours did not relate to students' lives or beliefs. For example, the majority of student participants did not think calling the police was an appropriate action when dealing with noisy neighbours, which was part of the content of this topic. This belief was only revealed when problem-posing questioning was added to the activity (Field Notes, June 10). When student participants shared their perspectives on how to deal with a noisy neighbour, their suggestions did not correspond to those included in the handout. Rather, they provided peaceful and understanding ways of dealing with this issue, which frankly, taught *me* better options. In this regard, the spirit of critical pedagogy was being enacted with knowledge sharing as a two-way practice. Further discussion on the topic of "Policing" is reserved to a later section of this thesis as it reflects some potential for criticality.

The *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book used in this research is but a small sample of the available published textbooks available to LINC teachers. It serves as an exemplary tool for the majority of books that have been created for LINC and other adult ESL programs. There are a lot of similarities in available resources such as themes, topics, and content that reflect the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) and *CLB* (2000; 2012) designations.

Barrier #2 Attendance Policy

Attendance is a substantial component in demonstrating accountability in LINC. Funding is allocated to programs through a per-seat model and places a monetary value on each spot in the class. In this regard, students are regarded as expenditures in LINC programs and if classes are not at capacity, they are perceived as not cost-effective. Attendance is a key topic of conversation among ESL professionals as it has high-stakes consequences. Discussions on "*How many students showed up?*" and "*How many students do you have?*" tend to dominate our staff

lunchroom because we know that our funding is at risk when our classes are not at capacity, and when students are absent. To secure continued funding, it was my understanding that the program's classes required students to have 70% attendance as mandated in our contribution agreement with the federal government. In 2011, a Toronto Star article reported that LINC program closures were due to "playing politics with immigrants" (Keung, 2011). At this time, \$44 million was cut from settlement services resulting in the closure of 14 local agencies in Toronto (Keung, 2011). Discussion among staff members of these closures resulted in an overwhelming preoccupation with attendance concerns in our program.

During this time, federal immigration officers would spontaneously visit our site to observe how the program was running. We were not informed of these visits ahead of time and staff were worried that we would face a sudden loss of funding, similar to another LINC program a couple of blocks away. During these unplanned drop-ins, an immigration officer would simply walk into our classroom and request to see our attendance record. Then, they would count the number of students in our class and leave. The interactions were short and brief, and they provided proof that attendance was of utmost importance. This was a constant source of concern for me (Field Notes, June 18).

To address this issue, an attendance policy was developed in our program, and it was introduced to students like a legal contract (Appendix A). It was given to students each term (twice a year) and provided to new students immediately when they joined (because similar to most LINC programs, we offer continuous intake). The policy we developed took into consideration parent students who were unable to be punctual because they had to ensure their children arrived at their school first. In these cases, some students had to walk to our school after their child's school bell rang or take public transit. It also outlined the consequences of those

who failed to adhere to the policy. The goal of the attendance policy was to ensure that students' attendance meet the federal government's mandate and to reinforce the importance of good attendance.

The attendance criteria created enormous stress and hardship for both me and student participants. Additionally, it evoked an authoritative/submissive relationship between me and student participants. I wanted to explore this issue in this research study because I felt there was a need to provide critical insights to a policy that could potentially compromise LINC funding. The data involved for this analysis was collected throughout the 7-week timeframe when discussions and reflections focused on attendance issues; there was not a specific activity involved although much discussion around this policy surfaced near the end of the study (Field Notes, June 17). Two challenges derived from it and are discussed below.

Attendance Challenge ONE: Inequities between students and me: If I can do it, so can you!

Prior to this research, my philosophy regarding attendance reflected the expression, "If I can do it, so can you!" Like many students, I was a mother. I had the responsibilities of ensuring my children had school lunches and arrived at school on time, and I was responsible for completing typical household chores. Our school was also quite far from my home, and I worked another job. For these reasons, it was initially very difficult for me to empathize with students' poor attendance. My priority as a teacher (and as a student in my own schooling) was primary. At the beginning of this research, I conveyed my beliefs about the importance of attendance in class (Field Notes, May 13). However, I came to realize through our classroom interactions and problem-posing discussions that student participants did not share similar attendance commitments.

Data were collected during daily interactions when related to attendance issues and upon student absences. I would jot down the circumstances, comment on the emotions and body language I observed, and then I would engage in problem-posing dialogues (*Why were you absent? Is everything ok?*). Through this problem-posing questioning, I attempted to connect to student participants with concern and compassion, *not* in accusatory tones (Field Notes, June 17). These conversations were done at times in groups, and on other occasions, privately with student participants if I gauged they would feel humiliated or not in front of others.

Findings suggest that the expectations I imposed on students with my ‘you can do it attitude’ did not consider circumstances of which I was not aware prior to problem-posing with student participants. This included assumptions that they could easily book appointments after class, get support from friends and/or family members, and essentially plan their lives similar to someone like me; someone who is familiar with the language, culture, and customs of Canada.

One student participant in particular caused me to confront my initial approach to student attendance. Ahlam’s lack of attendance (attending just over 2 percent of the time) was difficult to understand, which is why I labelled her reason to be ‘mental health’. Ahlam was demonstrating behaviours that I felt revealed she was under a tremendous amount of stress. For example, one day she came to me after one of the few times she was in attendance, and she commented to me that people everywhere were following her with what she felt were negative intentions (Field Notes, May 17). As a result, she believed it was not safe to come to class. In my non-professional opinion, Ahlam’s behaviours led me to consider the possibility that Ahlam might be experiencing mental health challenges. It is crucial to note that I am not a trained mental health professional, and my observations are subjective and limited. However, my impression that Ahlam was struggling and those struggles were affecting her ability to attend class helped to

activate my empathy and my desire to understand the motivations behind all my student participants' behaviour with respect to attendance.

Table 10 comprehensively represents the reflections and perspectives I developed through interactions with student participants regarding their lack of attendance. In tandem with the cultivation of critical social consciousness, inspired by Freire's (1970) concept of fostering compassion and understanding, I was able to highlight various obstacles encountered by student participants that I believed hindered consistent class attendance. The first column provides a list of different reasons student participants gave for their absence. The second column expresses my thoughts about that reason for absence, thoughts that are based on my experiences as a Canadian with knowledge of ways to navigate daily life from a position of privilege. The third column expresses my thinking about student participant absence as a result of my applying Freire's (1970) concept of critical social consciousness. His concept asks the teacher to work towards a more in-depth understanding of the issues students present, and then to take action against oppressive systemic forces (such as the rigid Attendance Policy) in order to make improvements in the daily lives of learners.

Table 3*Attendance: Reasons for Absences*

Reason Given for Absence	Teacher/Researcher- My Mindset	Student Participant Attendance Obstacles/Mindsets
Doctor Appointment	Book appointments after class	Students do not have the language abilities/strategies to choose appointment times & rely on others to go with them
Other Appointments (Social Worker, Settlement Worker, etc.)	Book appointments after class	Students do not have the language abilities/strategies to choose appointment times & rely on others to go with them
Child(ren) Sick	Ask a family member to help out	Mother's job (this related only to female student participants who were mothers)
Husband/Older Child(ren) Sick	They can take care of themselves	Wife/Mother's job to care for all sick family members
Student Sick	Miss class only if very ill	Stay home regardless of degree of illness
Visiting Relatives	Plan social events after class and/or on weekends	Visitors were prioritized over class
Cooking	Plan to cook outside of class time Do some meal prep on weekends	Homemade meals were prioritized over class
Housework	Plan to do chores outside of class time	At times, bigger cleaning chores were prioritized over class
Paid Work	Find opportunities that do not conflict with class times	Work when they can; making money trumps coming to class

Through our discussions, I realized that language ability was a key consideration for appointment times. Students expressed that they did not feel like they *could* book appointment times outside of school hours, or if they did, it would be too overwhelming to attend class *and* their appointments. One student participant noted, “Too much, teacher.” (Field Notes, June 17) Phrases like this were common when students reported absences. I also suspect that many students had to book appointments at inconvenient times because after-hour and optimal times were taken by people such as myself who tended to book outside of the work schedule and could

easily communicate more suitable times. I also came to understand through our problem-posing discussions that students did not know what to expect at these appointments (for example, how long the appointment would be, follow-ups) (Field Notes, June 17). Additionally, student participants noted that their appointments were accompanied often by family or friends, and they depended on their availability too. These reasons were foreign to me because I could easily call and book and/or re-book appointments, anticipate times and/or expectations, and attend appointments without support. During this process of knowing and by using a critical approach, I came to better understand the challenges these learners face and realized that although I had a busy life as a mom, teacher, and graduate student, student participants had an entirely distinct set of challenges stemming from their lack of experience with the Canadian culture and English language, which compromised their attendance. The initial comparisons I made failed to capture the constraints student participants had attending the program and as a result, caused conflict and tension in the classroom.

Attendance Challenge TWO: Living the Policy.

Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) note that, “[p]ower may also be hidden and expressed indirectly through dominant ideologies. In North America, the common ideology is that the market economy creates equal opportunity and success is available to everyone who works hard” (p. 10). I would extend this understanding to suggest that excellent attendance implies someone who is hardworking and *not* lazy, and this mentality is supported in program attendance expectations and policies. In the beginning of this journey, I believed that *good* students were the ones who showed up to class on time and were rarely absent. I mistakenly tried to impose my notions of good attendance onto student participants. I called them out when they were absent and frowned at them when they came to class late. However, our critical dialogues over the

course of this research study revealed that student participants placed more importance on their roles in the family than attending class, which was not something I originally acknowledged as a valid excuse. When I shifted my perception on attendance expectations, my attitude toward students with ‘poor’ attendance changed. My judgements were developed with more understanding and compassion.

The notions of attendance can be further illuminated by Benesch (2012), who has brought the importance of emotions to the critical forefront in English language teaching. Their work shows how objects can bring out different emotions amongst students and teachers. For example, teachers generally find dictionaries to be a valuable resource to be used in the classroom, and therefore, regard them as ‘happy’ objects whereas many students are discouraged when using them in the classroom because they find them difficult to use. Similar to Benesch’s research on dictionary usage in the classroom as ‘happy’ objects, I realized that students did not share similar emotions with me regarding their attendance. Attending class on time and consistently was something I regarded as *happy*, but this perspective was not shared by student participants. My discussions and observations during this research note how I valued good attendance, but students prided themselves on honouring family commitments first, as was evident in the reasons they provided for absence. When I tried to impose my values onto them, it created tension and unhappy emotions overall (Field Notes, May 13). The mismatch of feelings was clarified when I took a step back and listened to student participants (Field Notes, June 17). I realized that within the framework of what good attendance means to me, I was perpetuating a dominant ideology and biased expectation, which discounted many students’ values and beliefs.

The difference in feelings and attitudes participants had toward attendance and other dimensions of classroom learning can be influenced by value-orientation differences as described

in the intercultural communications field (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), which theorizes how cultural ideologies play a role in maintaining dominant discourses. In addition, within this understanding, stereotypes of cultural behaviours can negatively impact the perceptions people have of other cultural groups. Admittedly, in the process of conducting this study, I was guilty of subjecting student participants to aligning with my ideas of prioritizing school over family. At the start of this research, I began with critical notions that even though I held a dominant role in the classroom, students and I could commit to attending to the same degree because we should be *equals* in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, I assumed that like me, students should prioritize their attendance similar to how I did. In my reflections, I realized how my own ideologies on attendance and my role in the classroom impacted the landscape of our classroom and prioritized my values. I have come to recognize that my personal ideologies closely correspond with the attendance expectations outlined in the program, signifying that the issue transcends the scope of this brief 7-week study. Moreover, this association implies a more extensive endorsement of dominant ideologies, neglecting to acknowledge the valuable knowledge and understandings of students engaged in adult ESL programs.

Although my own ideas on attendance have since changed, low attendance risks the livelihood of our program and LINC programs across the country. LINC teachers still must *live* this policy despite our changed attitudes and recognition of other values. Frye's (1999) work addresses the need for considerations to attendance; especially with women who prioritize family life over attending ESL classes. In their study, they succinctly point out that educators must be mindful of "the delicate balance of social relations within which literacy lies and of the possible, sometimes negative, outcomes for students when they seek empowerment and change in their lives" (p. 503). Their approach was to offer free classes that supported open enrollment without

the constraints of an attendance policy. This allowed participants to attend class without pressure and subsequently, foster critical spaces to learn, reflect, and question new possibilities.

The majority of student participants in this study are adapting significantly to their new life in Canada. Many of them have come from non-literate backgrounds and are acclimatising to the expectations imposed on them- in and *outside* of the classroom. Many of them are the main caregivers within their family and feel obliged to nurture their loved ones above anything else. The expectations to attend *how I expect* are unfair and infringes on their vital roles in their family dynamics. Furthermore, the attendance policies imposed on students as mandated in federal LINC contribution agreements lack considerations to students' valid reasons for not attending in accordance with policies.

The federal government's per-seat model fails to support the values and difficulties students face when they cannot come to class every day. Current attendance policies support dominant values, and as a result, devalues the beliefs many students have. It is stressful and nerve-wracking for everyone in LINC programs to have federal immigration officers spontaneously drop in to simply note numbers. It would be more beneficial for government funders to adjust their policies and expectations so that students can without prejudice, tend to the family roles and cultural practices they value.

Barrier #3 Discrepancies in Stakeholders' Goals

Successful integration appears to be the common goal in LINC among programs, teachers, and student stakeholders; however, the findings show that different parties understand this goal differently.

Merriam-Webster (2022) defines, 'integrate' as:

1: to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole: UNITE

2a: to incorporate into a larger unit

b: to unite with something else

Findings show that this *blending* of immigrants into Canadian society is understood differently among program, teacher, and student stakeholders. This paper has previously highlighted the political complexity of the term, emphasizing that integration often presupposes economic contributions (Guo, 2013). Moreover, the concept of integration, while portrayed as a mosaic, conceals its historical shifts, dictated by changing historical, geographical, political, and cultural needs (Griffith, 2017), layered with racial dynamics (Guo, 2013) and assimilatory undertones (Derwing, 2017). This upcoming section will delineate these variations in the data findings of the research.

‘Successful Integration’: Program Viewpoint - Neoliberal Citizens.

The data collected in this research does not critically analyse the data and/or policies that shape LINC programs (as in the case in the field of discourse analysis) yet acknowledging the program’s covert objectives are imperative in this discussion. Previous research reveals that neoliberal agendas are imposed in government-funded adult ESL programs (Warriner, 2016). Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices that suggests that human well-being can be most effectively improved by enhancing individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by robust private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey, 2005). The ideas of working hard, being determined, and learning high levels of English will produce economic and social advantages are common themes in neoliberal thinking (Warriner, 2016). These sentiments were more recently shared when the Director of Language and Francophone Policies, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) stated in TESL Ontario’s yearly conference panel discussion that employment is a primary focus in LINC

programming (McKay et al., 2020). This information suggests that LINC programs perceive successful integration of newcomers in terms of primarily gaining employment and contributing to the economy.

Economic, ethnocentric and neoliberal ideals are further present in the teaching resources available to LINC instructors. These texts are readily available for purchase at ESL conferences and present in many LINC centers I have visited. There are prescribed ‘Canadian’ cultural practices and values depicted in numerous ESL textbooks, which portray unfair and biased representations of what it means to be Canadian. For example, Gulliver (2010) discusses how immigrant success is portrayed in a common ESL resource as a simple matter of working hard and persevering. However, they succinctly point out that these characteristics fail to capture and honour the difficulties the majority of newcomers face. For most immigrants, it is impossible to gain the type of success depicted in these texts by simply working hard and persevering. Additionally, Gulliver points out how texts normalize immigrants working at jobs in which they are overqualified for as a means to pursue their success. Ilieva (2000) also highlights how teaching texts imply cultural and class norms and as a result, the financial realities and cultural practices of many immigrants are not represented in these texts. Furthermore, Thomson and Derwing, (2004) point out how many instructors tend to rely on published material to support their teaching and in their research advocate for a better representation of Canadian values in ESL textbooks.

With regard to curricula, *Canadian Culture* is a theme outlined in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002). This resource offers, for example, content that caters to particular understandings of what it means to live in Canada such as “Happy birthday” and “Merry Christmas” (p. 245). These notions were challenged in this research during the lesson on

Celebrations where it became evident that celebrating birthdays was not a universal custom and sparked a lot of controversy in our classroom space (Field Notes, May 22). Many teaching resources support an underlying expectation that immigrants should assimilate to dominant cultural practices, values, and norms.

To summarize, the program's expectations assume that students participating in the program should adapt to the Canadian values and practices that are presented in the resources and policies, which leaves little opportunity for different perspectives. Rather than *integrating*, Guo (2013) argues that practices in adult ESL programming are better reflected as *assimilatory* because there are minimal opportunities to encompass diversity. My experience with teaching the class on birthdays, and the diversity of student participant opinions that surfaced about the value of this topic support this claim, with some wanting to just 'go along to get along', or in others words, to assimilate to the Canadian culture. Furthermore, there is a ministerial understanding that programming is in place in order for immigrants to contribute to the economy of Canada by finding jobs. In this sense, they are seen as a commodity that will contribute to the economy rather than unique individuals that can enrich our society. The dynamics of "[n]eoliberalism straddles a wide range of social, political, and economic phenomena at different levels of complexity" (Saad-Filho & Johnston, 2005 p. 1). This research supports the mosaic of this phenomena and how the historical and current path of integrating newcomers into Canadian society is guided in program directives as a method to advance neoliberal interests. This was evident in critical classroom discussions that uncovered the absence and acceptance of different ways of seeing the world. Rather, classroom discourses gravitated toward practices that encouraged participants to value neoliberal attributes such as being on time, attending daily, and

valuing oneself as an individual rather than within a community. These attributes were realized in teaching resources and funding conditions, especially with regard to the attendance policy.

‘Successful Integration’: My Viewpoint - Active Members of Society.

My goal as an adult ESL instructor is to facilitate learning for *active* and *equal* membership of society; this is my understanding of successful integration for ESL students. I envision students as Canadian citizens who are deeply committed to shaping a Canada that honors their cultures, beliefs, and, most significantly, values active participation. I imagine a space to support learning whereby the norms of the dominant language and culture are explored and negotiated by students. To accomplish this, I use critical pedagogical approaches in the classroom in order to question power dynamics, and to reflect, transform and develop teaching and learning to make it more empowering for students. There were many ways where my understandings of ‘successfully integrating’ via criticality conflicted with the policies, resources, and program/student expectations. For example, as I started to teach from the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book, I noticed a recurring problem regarding the celebration of birthdays. The materials assumed that all newcomers should and would celebrate birthdays, which didn't align with the diverse cultural backgrounds of my students. This highlighted how the government-funded materials, though well-intentioned, overlooked the cultural diversity among newcomers. The depiction of birthday celebrations as an integratory practice in the materials, and initially in my own mindset, failed to acknowledge that not everyone in Canada necessarily engages in this tradition. It was also communicated to me that students were more focused on learning remote facts outlined in *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011) rather than pursuing content about active citizenship when it came to the topic of citizenship (Field Notes, May 13). My ability to implement critical pedagogy in my ESL classroom is heavily dependent

on my viewpoint of what successful integration means and how critical pedagogical approaches can best support successful integration. It is crucial to clarify that my personal idea of integration was not the guiding focus of this study.

‘Successful Integration’: Students’ Viewpoints - Canadian citizens.

Data collected focused specifically on understanding what successful integration meant for student participants. In contrast to the prescribed program expectations mentioned above, student participants prioritized gaining Canadian citizenship as a key indicator of what successful integration meant for them (Field Notes, May 13).

At the beginning of this study, two classroom needs assessment activities were conducted. In the initial assessment, 12 student participants were tasked with delineating their learning objectives for the class. Notably, 83% of respondents expressed a particular interest in the subject of citizenship (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13). Based on the Field Notes, it was also recorded that throughout the 7-week study, student participants consistently expressed an interest in learning more about Canadian citizenship.

In the second needs assessment (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13), students were invited to write down where and with whom they needed to use English, and in another activity, list the top five things they wanted to learn in our class ([Appendix C](#)). The intent of these activities was to gain access to what student participants wanted from this program, and to stimulate critical discussion afterward. For the latter activity, I had written a prompt on the whiteboard: “I want to learn about...” This activity was accompanied with a lot of discussion and requests for vocabulary and spelling support. During these needs assessments activities, many responses coincided with the themes and topics outlined in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) such as shopping, health, and education (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13). Additionally, the majority of

respondents mentioned that they were interested in obtaining a job in the future; more than half of student participants expressed this goal, with two particularizing their interest in nursing, and another two in mechanical engineering. However, the one subject that stood out for most was becoming a Canadian citizen. This topic dominated the discussion and responses in the needs' assessment activity (Field Notes, May 13). I took notes on our discussion by engaging in problem-posing questions. I asked students why this topic was important to them, and the consensus was that it allowed them to travel out of the country more freely and gave them a sense of belonging. This conversation continued with expressions of frustrations on the newly imposed language requirements required in Canadian citizenship applications. Students felt like they had to 'jump through hoops' (my interpretation of their expressed frustrations) to obtain this important document required in the application process (Field Notes, May 13).

Obtaining citizenship was a key goal for many students in this study, but program resources do not explicitly support this aim. For example, in the federally funded resource I used (*LINC Classroom Activities*, 2009) in this research study, the word 'citizenship' is scarcely present in the text.

Findings in this research supports literature that indicates that the process to become Canadian is challenging in LINC (Derwing & Thomson, 2004; Pinet, 2006). Student participants noted that the language in *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011) (the document required for the citizenship test) is exceptionally difficult to understand, which has been shared by other scholars (Derwing, 2017). Student participants candidly expressed their frustration on wanting to become a Canadian citizenship and the obstacles in achieving this. The findings also show how conflicted I felt in helping student participants achieve what they

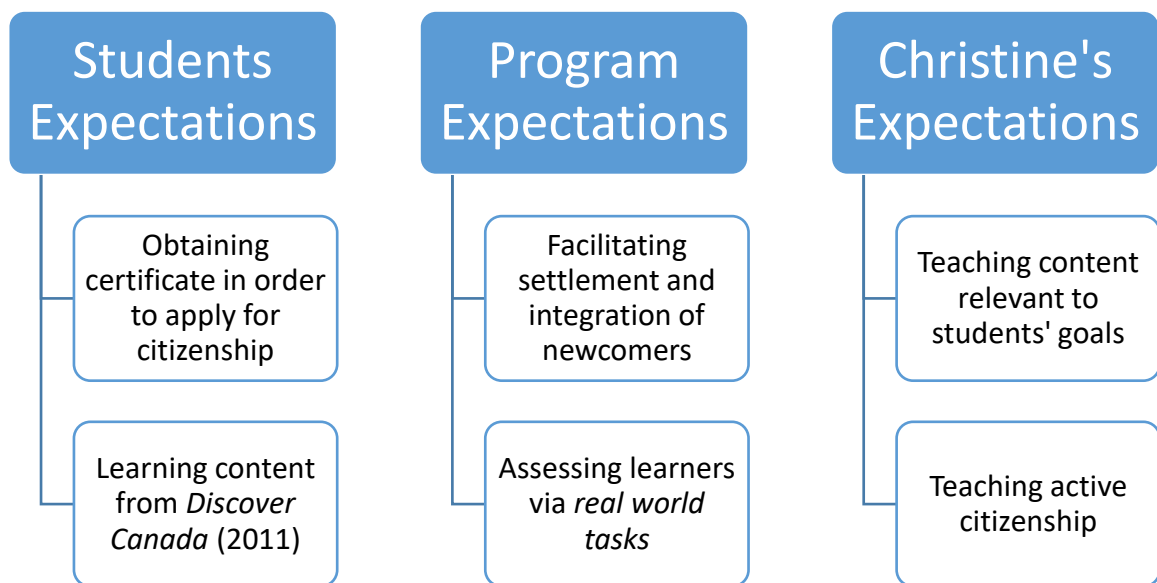
understood as successful integration because there are not adequate resources or program expectations in place to accomplish this.

The Problem of Goal Inconsistency with Regard to Citizenship.

In terms of what students want from a LINC program, the findings show that there was a key discrepancy with reference to students' desire for Canadian citizenship, what program expectations were, and my own critical approach to teaching active citizenship. Figure 9 outlines these differences.

Figure 7

Expectations from Different Stakeholders



Student participants indicated that they wanted space in our class to study citizenship content to pass the citizenship test (Field Notes, May 13). These goals were noted in both the needs assessments and the discussions that coincided with these activities. The test is based on the content that comes from *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011).

Furthermore, student participants expressed a desire to obtain the required document needed to

apply for Canadian citizenship (Field Notes, May 13). This document is provided in LINC programs when learners complete enough assessments to achieve CLB 4 (or higher) in listening and speaking.

Program expectations are evident in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) whereby the program's mandate is "to provide basic language instruction to adult newcomers in both official languages and to facilitate the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society" (p. 6). Although there is a lack of program content related to obtaining citizenship, the themes and topics in the curricula touch upon some of the content required for taking the citizenship test such as geography, government, history, and holidays. However, instructors are limited in their ability to teach citizenship content because it is not supported in assessment expectations, which are based on developing real-world tasks. Although I was willing to teach citizenship content, I wondered how I could assess it within the framework of developing a real-world task. The *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) clearly state, "[t]raditional methods of grammar and content-based testing should be avoided" (p. 116). As a result, because of focusing on teaching citizenship content, it is very difficult to create an assessment tool to reflect a real-world task. In addition, citizenship education is a precarious subject in LINC. It is a topic that I have addressed numerous times at TESL Ontario conferences, and I have been repeatedly told by conference presenters that LINC is not intended for citizenship preparation.

My own expectations of teaching citizenship reflect taking an active approach to being Canadian. I imagine fostering opportunities whereby students, for example, learn ways to advocate for their rights, or critically examine political leaders and debate their stances. Within this framework, students form their understanding of being Canadian by contributing their

viewpoints and challenging others' opinions in order to gain better understandings from each other. My perceptions of active citizenship are informed by Fleming (2010), who emphasizes that "key curriculum and assessment documents tend to position ESL learners as relatively powerless, passive, and atomized recipients of programming designed to normalize them into a dominant culture" (p. 589). As a critical pedagogue, I wanted to avoid positioning students passively and rather create spaces to advocate for empowering and active engagement, which are characteristics of critical pedagogy approaches. What I discovered during this research study, however, was that student participants were not interested in pursuing my understanding of active citizenship, but rather, they wanted to focus on accessing the practical skills and knowledge needed to apply for citizenship and for passing the citizenship test (Field Notes, May 13). In my reflections, I realized that while I wanted to explicitly teach active citizenship because the students did not have that goal, I realized that I could not ignore the students' wishes. In addition, active citizenship is not in any way reflected in the program content or in *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011) content. As a result, my role would better serve students by teaching citizenship content as reflected in *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011), and support students in developing their test-taking skills.

There is a complex and intertwined understanding of what it means to be Canadian for student participants. Norton Peirce (1995) draws on these complexities in what they have termed investment rather than motivation. This term allows for considerations of the intricacies of social identities, power dynamics, and language learning in ESL classrooms. Through problem-posing, I was able to understand that during the time of this study, most student participants were invested in gaining citizenship in order to travel easily, have status

security including not getting deported or facing restricted visitation outside of the country, and have overall pride in having a Canadian passport.

The findings in this research show that there were competing factors regarding how citizenship content should be addressed in the classroom. For this reason, it complicates the goals of how and if citizenship content should be taught in LINC programs. Student participants indicated that citizenship content was important to them and wanted it to be taught in a manner that helped them pass the citizenship test. However, this expectation was not supported in LINC assessment practices, which are based on developing real world tasks. Furthermore, my own critical pedagogical goal in fostering democratic and equitable values in citizenship content were not supported by the students. I had to adapt my expectations to support a method of teaching that I felt contradicted my notion of critical pedagogical approaches. Rather, student participants perceived my role as a facilitator of teaching the facts and key information from *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011). By doing this, I was also limited to developing assessment tools for CLB designation, which is a key component of LINC programming.

Barrier #4 Assessment Practices

In order to assess the language proficiency of learners using the CLB, LINC teachers must have an adequate number of assessments completed in each skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Assessments are conducted to reflect what learners can do in English in the above-mentioned skills. LINC teachers can develop their own assessments based on the *CLB* (2000; 2012), but these are time consuming, challenging to develop, and completed without compensation (Haque & Cray, 2007). Our program used an assessment resource called, *On Target* (Mitra, 1998) that aligned with the *CLB* and provided clear instructions for instructors.

For this activity, I conducted the assessment according to the instructions in the book and took observations notes on what transpired (Field Notes, June 18). The activity was followed up with a discussion period to reflect on what happened.

I observed that this activity created a lot of stress for myself and student participants (Field Notes, June 18). I needed them completed in order to have documentation that proves what a learner is capable of doing in English. On average, I would ensure that students had 6-8 assessments completed in each skill; this was a program expectation. Like most tests, they are done individually and without help. Prior to administering an assessment, my role was to ensure that the content and skills necessary to complete the task have been tackled in class. At times, this was problematic because of attendance issues and continuous intake of students, however, consistent assessments were expected by administration in order to ensure progress was being made.

Despite informing student participants that assessments were necessary to showcase their capabilities in English, I noted that students sought help from each other or asked me to teach them the content (Field Notes, June 18). When I informed these students that they could not get support because the assessment was a way to measure their ability to use English, they exhibited a lot of frustration, and at times, ignored my request to not ask others for help. This situation placed me in a position of authority, which reflects the banking concept (Freire, 1970) whereby students are expected to comply. It made me feel uncomfortable because in order to conduct these types of assessments, students had to struggle through them on their own or ‘cheat’ by asking others for help.

There were a couple of reasons why ‘cheating’ may have occurred. First of all, one-third of student participants were promoted up from the literacy class indicating that they have not had

formal education in their L1. This lack of knowing formal ways of learning probably complicated students' understanding of the assessment process. Secondly, since attendance was an issue for many participants, they missed lessons and skill-building activities. As a result, when the assessment was put in front of them, they were not prepared to complete the task. Despite these reasons, I felt that I was obligated to conduct assessments in a timely manner in order to meet program expectations. It was common lunch-room chit-chat for colleagues to ask, "How many assessments did you do this month?" Ultimately, I felt that if I did not conduct enough assessments, I was not a 'good' teacher.

As an experienced teacher, I was also frustrated because I knew what students were capable of, but the circumstances of these assessments did not reflect this. My sentiments mirror Haque and Cray's (2007) survey of ESL teachers who also indicated that their professional judgements of language ability were constrained in assessment practices that adhered to the *CLB*. Additionally, since many student participants have had limited experiences in formal education, the process of testing/assessing was a skill in and of itself that was new to them too. They were not only learning English but trying to grapple through the skills needed to be formally educated. In some cases, and as in the case of this particular activity, I avoided informing students of planned assessments until the day of because there tended to be more absences when there was knowledge of an upcoming assessment.

Assessment topics were another contentious issue that came up in this research. As I discussed previously, student participants indicated throughout this research study that they wanted to learn the content in *Discover Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011) to help them gain citizenship (Field Notes & Classroom Memorabilia, May 13). I wholeheartedly supported this request, but it was difficult to assess this type of learning in a LINC framework

because learning remote facts and dates from the citizenship book was not a real-world task, which were the expectations in assessment practices. As a result, students and I carved out time to learn and talk about citizenship, but this took time away from developing real world tasks, and the opportunities for students to be sufficiently assessed on them (as per program expectations). I have yet to find adequate resources that support learners' goals of learning about citizenship that comply with program assessment expectations.

Implications for Classroom Practice

The findings show that there are many barriers that impede the implementation of critical pedagogy. This includes Freire's (1970) banking concepts engrained in program texts, students, and *even me*; the teacher, who preaches criticality! Program expectations are an extension to these barriers; students are expected to sacrifice their priorities to adhere to LINC program's attendance policies. Furthermore, program policies do not reflect that for many newcomers, appointments and other tasks that are dependent on support from others impede their ability to come to class. As this study reveals, dominant ideologies tend to overpower students' lives and cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. Lastly, the angst of 'proving' language ability via assessment practices creates a space that no one who directly participates in these classes want or find helpful in the language learning experience. The need to discuss these obstacles and offer ways in which to address them will be the focus of Chapter 5.

Potentials

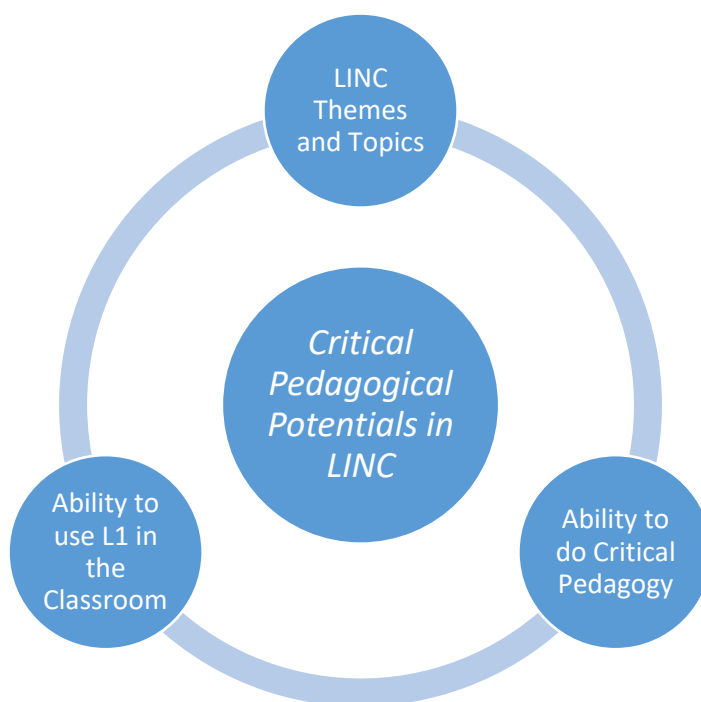
~Don't Throw the Baby out with the Bath Water~

Adult ESL programs have the capacity to offer valuable opportunities for newcomers to Canada. Throughout this research study, student participants often expressed appreciation for being able to attend what they call a free class in order to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to help them settle in Canada. The findings show that in our LINC 1 classroom, the

themes and topics presented in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) provided potential in allowing students to critically learn important aspects of living in Canada. Furthermore, findings indicate that there is potential for implementing a critical approach in the classroom (although there are some challenges in doing that, which will be discussed). Lastly, findings reveal how using L1 in the classroom can provide opportunities for critical engagement in the classroom. This section highlights ways in which the LINC program can currently implement critical pedagogical approaches. Figure 10 provides a visual of these potentials.

Figure 8

Overview of Critical Pedagogical Potentials in LINC



Potential #1: LINC Themes and Topics: LINC Curriculum Guidelines (2002)

During the time this research was conducted, Toronto Police Service executed a raid in an apartment complex where a few student participants lived and a large population of Somalis

resided. This story made the front page of the Toronto Star, which depicted a picture of two elderly Somali women who were allegedly injured during the raid (Pagliaro, 2013). According to the Toronto Star, the sweep stemmed from a year-long investigation and was aimed to target illegal guns, drugs, and gang members. Ironically, this event coincided with our topic on policing; a topic that derived from conducting a needs assessment and chosen by students.

As one can imagine, there was a lot of buzz amongst Somali students and staff within our program during the time of the raids. There were many questions and confusion as to why this raid took place, and how the police were managing the situation.

Initially, the materials used for the topic of policing came from the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) under the theme, *Canadian Law* (pp. 162-5). I chose this resource because it had clear instructions, was photocopiable, aligned to the *CLB*, and was easily accessible to me. After following the instructor notes (p. 162) and administering the handout, our class reflected on the content, and I took notes on our discussion (Field Notes, June 10). During the problem-posing discussion, we discovered that much of the activity content was not relevant to student participants' lives. For example, one prompt involved a driver asking where to park, yet only one student participant indicated that they had a driver's licence. Furthermore, another prompt involved a conversation between a bicycle rider and police officer, yet no one in the class owned a bike and in fact, many student participants did not even know how to ride a bike. Lastly, the issue of calling the police on a noisy neighbour was included in a prompt, but there was an overwhelming rejection to this type of reaction to a noisy neighbour. Most student participants suggested more community-based solutions such as bringing the issue up with the neighbour or escalating the issue to the landlord, if necessary and as a last resort.

The content of the topic critically pivoted significantly after this activity, as the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) handout (p. 164) did not seem to interest student participants at all. This was understandable considering the circumstances that lead to the recent police raid, which took place in a couple of participants' building of residence. Furthermore, the media coverage of the raid focused on people of Somali background, and the majority of students in the class were Somali. During my problem-posing prompting about the topic of policing, student participants clearly wanted to know more about how the local police were handling shootings and violence; not how to complain about a noisy neighbour (Field Notes, June 10). During a brainstorming discussion, it became apparent that two topics of interest were "murder" and "shootings," which notably differed from the themes outlined in the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) handouts. Luckily, I had previously arranged for a community officer to come to speak to our class and prior to their visit, student participants and I collaboratively developed questions that addressed the concerns we had in relation to police in their community (Classroom Memorabilia, June 11). I also informed our guest speaker that our students had developed their own questions and additionally, I invited higher-level students and staff to attend our session to assist in translating, if necessary. It was important to make our guest officer aware of the format of this visit because in the past, they had prepared their own content and left little room for accommodating our questions. Student participants' questions were primarily focused on asking the officer a couple of personal inquiries (although 'Canadian' etiquette on what types of question should be asked was briefly discussed, I decided to play out the possible intrusive questions) and questions related to crimes in their area. As a participant myself, I also contributed to the content of the questions because I felt issues like spanking and domestic violence were worth learning about because of their legal consequences. From my experience teaching adult ESL, I knew that these

issues were problematic for many newcomers to Canada and as in the spirit of critical pedagogy, I wanted my ideas to be shared too. Table 11 highlights the questions we developed for our guest police officer (classroom memorabilia, June 10).

Table 11

Questions for Police Officer

Questions for Police Officer
Where are you from?
Do you have children? How many children do you have?
Where do you work in Toronto? Where have you worked?
If you fight someone, should you call the police?
*What should be done if a husband and wife are fighting?
*Can I spank my child?
**If my neighbours are making a lot of noise, should I call 9-1-1?
How long have you been a police officer?
Why are so many young Somali getting shot?
Why can't the police find the shooters/murderers?
What causes people to sell drugs in the first place?

Note: These are the questions participants collectively developed to ask our guest police officer.

The officer who came had been on the force for 41 years and was nearing retirement. *

Questions Christine (teacher/researcher) proposed. ** Questions related to *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) handout.

Including myself, 12 participants co-constructed this lesson. While I was eliciting and writing questions on the board, the Vietnamese student was recording them on a piece of paper. When we had our questions, we collectively organized what order they should be asked and by whom. Each person was responsible to memorize one question for the next day.

The findings do not address the experience that came out of the officer's visit (although it was highly informative, and I was in awe of the courage it took for students to stand up and ask their questions). Rather, the focus was on the process of getting to this stage. We were able to take a theme from the curriculum and create a critical lesson, which encompassed shared knowledge and critical discussions. For this reason, the themes and topics in our program have the potential of tending to the interest of student participants as well as having the opportunities to be developed with criticality in mind.

Potential #2: Doing Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is not a method to teaching or learning, nor is it a static theory to uphold; it is a practice that one *does*, and this can be adapted over time (Canagarajah, 2005). I come to the classroom each day with an attitude of instilling equitable, democratic, and ethical values for everyone in the class- including *myself*. These understandings evolve and change over time. When necessary and if possible, I critically pivot teaching and learning when those standards are not being met. I also reflect on my teaching continuously in order to improve it. Critical pedagogical strategies such as problem-posing provide opportunities for *all* participants to consider what they are learning and, in the process, transform the means of learning. "People bring with them their cultural resources and identities, experiences of social discrimination and life pressures, resistances to oppression, and strengths to survival" (Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004, p. 7). These are the considerations that guide me in my work.

One activity that I presented during this research required no critical pivoting because it began using a problem-posing approach and stayed the course. We were working on one of the themes from the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) entitled, *A Child's Education* (pp. 372-373) because many participants had or planned to have children in the future. This activity

attempted to model a problem-posing activity conveyed in Wallerstein and Auerbach's (2004) book, *Problem-Posing at Work: Popular Educator's Guide* (see pp. 35-60 for a comprehensive overview of this approach). I drew a picture of a classroom interaction of a parent-teacher meeting in order to "trigger" (p. 35) critical dialogue, which can also be called 'codes' or 'codification'.

My picture reflected the key characteristics Wallerstein and Auerbach suggest and includes a familiar problem (parent-teacher interviews), displays a problem (bad grade on a report card). Using this picture led to a guided discussion with open-ended questions. I chose this scenario because I knew parent-teacher interactions were quite different culturally and it was a topic of interest. I chose to draw a woman with a hijab because it represented how most female participants in this study dress, and most of the students in the class were female. My assumption while creating this illustration was that she was the mother of the child. Beside her, was a female student; the daughter of the mother. There was no specific reason why I drew her as a female; it may have stemmed from being a mother to six daughters. To the left, I drew a teacher and during our discussion, she was referred to as a she. My own biases depict her as a white female because at the time, I believed she best represented teachers from schools that student participants' children attended. The image is presented in Figure 11.

Figure 9

Problem-posing Activity in Education Lesson



The guiding problem-posing questions I used for this activity are outlined in Table 10. The framing of these questions was motivated by Wallerstein and Auerbach's (2004) depictions of problem-posing questions that were presented in their workbook. They were developed to be open-ended questions aimed to spark discussions and gain perspectives from student participants.

Table 10

Problem-Posing Guiding Questions for Education Activity

Questions
What do you see?
What are they saying?
How does the child feel?
How does the mother feel?
Who do you relate to?

Some of the discussions that transpired from this activity were concerns that the child's mother probably does not know English and is unable to help them with their homework (Field Notes, (Field Notes, June 4). I observed that there were expressions of sadness from student participants for both the mother and child in this picture. Furthermore, who was to blame for the poor grade (D-) was discussed, and there was a general consensus that the mother's lack of English removes her from the blame. Student participants also considered the costs of hiring a tutor but hypothesized that the mother could not afford one. Some participants mentioned that perhaps, the teacher does not care and that she probably perceives this as the mother's problem.

An interesting point came from Zahra, who was normally quiet and shy. With uncharacteristically eagerness, she raised a key concern by asking, "Where's the father?" (Field Notes, June 4). Her reflections focused on wondering why this woman was alone and why there was no father or male family member present. She advocated for a need to help the child, but the mother alone should not be responsible for this.

With regard to the last question mentioned in the previous table (*Who do you relate to?*), no one related to the teacher (Field Notes, June 4). Student participants did not appear to

understand the role the teacher played in this scenario. I offered some suggestions about how teachers can provide resources for students who are struggling, but intuited that for most participants, concerns over children are not a school problem, but a family one.

This activity effectively engaged participants (including myself) to critically explore circumstances that affect many newcomers to Canada who have school-aged children. Language skills were also addressed throughout the activity as I wrote vocabulary and phrases on the board. We worked through some appropriate strategies for support too (asking an English-speaking friend or family member to attend the conference or asking for translation support). Student participants were able to actively help me transform our teaching and learning to better understand their challenges and ideas on education. I was also able to bring focus to their positionality rather than prescribed content from a teaching resource. At the end of the lesson, I noted that I felt that students were heard and was happy to report active participation from the quieter students (Field Notes, June 4).

In order to create this resource, I had scoured the books available to me by the program and spent a great deal of time researching online resources. I could not find anything adequate to capture my purpose of this problem-posing activity. I had also considered hiring an artist/illustrator to draw the picture but was unsuccessful. This activity consumed *a lot* of my time during the planning stage. It involved me thinking *a lot* about how to bring this topic to critical learning and how I could draw an interaction to best reflect students' circumstances. It was not an idea I felt I could share with administrators or colleagues because they would simply direct me to use published resources that cover the same topic (but different content). This conclusion was based on past experiences. I noted that it felt very isolating and laborious to *do*

critical pedagogy in the classroom although it warmed my heart to reflect on the engagement that occurred.

Potential #3: L1 in the classroom

How knowledge is obtained in critical pedagogical approaches involves opportunities to share different points of view (Freire, 1970). Valuing others' perspectives and insights equally is a key tenet of critical pedagogy and using L1 in the classroom provided me an opportunity to critically explore this issue.

Using L1 in the classroom is an issue that I have pondered many times. My own experience with this has swayed back and forth throughout my career. In the past, I have used strategies to discourage L1 usage by setting up a "language jar" whereby if a student were caught speaking their L1, they would have to contribute 25 cents to the jar. This was an idea proposed to me from a fellow professional who did that in their class. On the other end of the spectrum, I have also encouraged L1 use in the classroom after learning the importance that L1 has in the development of one's identity and language skills (Cummins, 2013). This allowance helps students' cultural identities become normalized while at the same time, normalizing it for others too.

As someone who mindfully pays attention to power dynamics in the classroom, I found Auerbach's (1993) article interesting to point out that historically, monolingualism in the classroom was established politically without pedagogical considerations. The author notes that in fact, restricting L1 use in the classroom can hinder the acquisition process and the practice perpetuates disempowering relations. In a broader sense, "English only" (or French) can be found in citizenship requirements, government offices, and cultural ideologies. Language plays a key role in cultural connection and identity and in my opinion, when classrooms (or programs)

restrict one's L1, they are essentially creating an imbalance of power. This is my knowledge coming to the forefront, but I wanted to foster a space where student participants had an opportunity to share their ideals on the matter and more importantly, the outcome of whether L1 should be used in the classroom. LINC programs do not have an 'English Only' policy, so we were able to develop a format without any impositions.

After completing the questionnaire on L1 (See Appendix D: Participant Questionnaire on L1 in the Classroom) and its subsequent discussion, I guided students to create a classroom policy on using their L1 in the classroom (Field Notes, May 16). This part of the research was developed due to my interest in exploring the use of L1 from a critical pedagogical approach. In addition, it was prompted by students' ideas on how to use their L1 (or other people using their L1) in the classroom.

During this process, student participants and I collectively created a classroom policy to adhere to this issue by taking into consideration all of our perspectives and circumstances. Student participants had a lot to say and share and I discovered my own notions of using L1 in the classroom shifted with their input.

It is important to point out that out of 16 student participants, 10 of them spoke the same L1. The remaining six did not have classmates who spoke their L1. This noteworthy demographic resulted in some interesting conclusions and considerations. Furthermore, not all participants agreed on the use of L1 and provided different reasons why they felt L1 should or should not be used in the classroom. Overall, these differences were respectfully acknowledged by way of nods of understanding; there was no controversy noted (Field Notes, May 16).

In sum, many participants indicated that their L1 was important for their religion, culture, and traditions (Field Notes, May 15 & May 16). This resonates with previous research on the

topic (Cummins, 2013; 2017a; 2017b) that strongly connects the importance of L1, culture, and identity in ESL classrooms. Somali participants indicated that L1 in the classroom was important to use to greet each other as this was part of their religion and culture. One participant indicated that it created a sense of “brotherhood” (his word) when their L1 was used (Field Notes, May 15). This was interesting because it addressed their identity and how that is linked to their language. This was something they wanted to be able to do in the classroom as to not forego their religious and/or cultural practices. One key greeting used by Somalis is an Arabic greeting. This is because many Muslims learn about Islam in Quranic Arabic citing that it is important to learn the Quran in the language it was created in (Arabic). The expression, “as-salaam-alaikum” means “peace be upon you” and is a common greeting to all Muslims regardless of one’s L1. In response, an interlocutor replies, “wa-alaikum-salaam,” which means, “and on to you, peace.” Interestingly enough, even non-Muslims in our class have learned this greeting in the classroom and reply “wa-alaikum-salaam” to their Muslim counterparts. I say it too and when I do, you can see the eyes of a student light up hearing this familiar greeting. The reactions I observed in the student participants seemed to be generally positive when there were attempts to use non-English greetings. Comments such as “wa-alaikum-salaam” uttered by a Tibetan student participant were met with many participants’ smiles and this helped me to form this impression of positivity (Field Notes, May 16). Perceptions among student participants aligned with contemporary concepts of translanguaging (Kaiper-Marquez, 2023), supporting the use of learners' L1s in the classroom as a way to legitimize one's language. During our class discussion, my observations suggested that these positions were critically reflected upon and accepted by some student participants who nodded in agreement and agreed verbally (Field Notes, May 16).

I noted that many other participants, however, felt that using “too much” L1 in the classroom hindered language acquisition (Field Notes, May 15). One participant expressed, “It’s very hard to continue English all day.” Despite that challenge, they believed that speaking their L1 could potentially impede the process of learning. They wanted acknowledgement from me on how hard it is to speak a new language all day long, which I conceded. In addition, Somali participants were sensitive to non-speakers of their language and wanted them to know that the usage of their L1 was primarily for better learning and cultural preservation; not to gossip behind their backs. This was an important aspect they wanted to communicate. Other reasons for not using “too much” L1 in the classroom related to feeling “too comfortable” in one’s L1 and the need to get out of one’s comfort zone, which goes with learning any new skill.

The next day, we reflected on all the answers provided, and joined in one last discussion. My role in this activity primarily was to record answers, but at one point during our discussion, one Somali participant asked me how *I* felt about them using their L1 in the classroom (Field Notes, May 16). This question was met with a lot of nods of agreement from other participants, indicating that many participants showed curiosity about my perspective. This questioning delighted me because I believed it was a breakthrough from the banking education model. Rather than me, the authoritative teacher standing at the front of the class asking the questions, participants were asking *me* while I was sitting with *them*. Although my role as the teacher could denote that they were asking me my opinion because of my positionality, I do not think that was the case. In that moment, the discussion was understood to have a collective understanding, and that we were going to base L1 guidelines collaboratively. In my response, I mindfully answered that I thought it was “ok,” but I had concerns for the non-Somali speakers in the class because they did not know what was being said and also, how the absence of someone in the class who

spoke their L1 made them feel. My reply echoed the documented concerns from the previous day's work.

During this dialogue, we digressed to a discussion about my role in the classroom. I asked student participants why my opinion mattered so much. Some responses were, "What the teacher says, goes." and "[a] student is [a] student and should act like [a] student." Another participant linked my role to the role of a mother and said it is my responsibility to teach students how to behave and what to study (Field Notes, May 16). I took the opportunity to stress that their opinions mattered as much as mine and that I could learn as much from them as they could from me.

Overall, participants felt that I had made using L1 in the classroom "comfortable", but they did not want to be allowed to use their L1 and that I should be the authoritarian of that (Field Notes, May 16). It was not as critical as I would have liked because participants wanted me to police the rules, but it was a start.

At the end of this activity, we were able to collectively agree to a verbal policy regarding the use of L1 in the classroom. Student participants aligned on the following ideals (as recorded in Field Notes, May 16):

- English should be used as much as possible
- L1 can be used for cultural greetings and/or expressions
- L1 can be used extensively at break times
- L1 can be used for clarification, but the student should indicate that beforehand as to respect the teacher and non L1 speakers
- If L1 is being used, speakers should speak quietly 'out of respect' for those who do not understand what is being said

After this activity, class ran much more smoothly. Since the rules were made together, everyone participated in enforcing them. Despite the previous expression that I was the ‘mother,’ I observed Somali students quietly reminding each other when the occasional chit chat was not in accordance with the rules (Field Notes, May 17). It was not *I*, the teacher, who was the sole enforcer of the rules, and this brought me relief. In my observations of body language and facial expressions, it also appeared that the non-Somali participants did not mind when Somali was spoken in the class. I also felt more comfortable when Somali was being spoken in the class. When it happened, it was usually a short interaction and quick declaration to the non-Somali speakers the intention of why their L1 was being used.

By using this critical approach, everyone was able to share and express their thoughts on a contentious issue in ESL classes. We were able to listen and reflect on each other’s perspectives and collaboratively create an environment in which everyone was comfortable. Furthermore, by using a problem-posing approach and engaging in collaborative discussions, I learned that my assumptions did not always ring true. For example, when I observed students whispering in Somali in the classroom, I assumed it was because they were ashamed, but their explanation indicated that I was clearly mistaken (Field Notes, May 15). Rather, the quietness in speaking a language I (or others in the class) did not know was done out of respect and consideration; not because they were embarrassed. These types of interactions have allowed me to reflect on my assumptions of behaviours in the class and change how I address and understand them.

Implications for Classroom Practice

There is ample potential to carry out critical pedagogy in LINC classrooms. The findings reveal that the themes and topics presented in LINC resources are a good starting point for lesson

development. During our needs assessments and collaborative discussions, students have expressed interest in learning about topics related to health, education, Canada, law/police, employment, and community services, all themes and topics that are included in the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002). However, at times, the specific *content* of these topics in readily available resources differed from the interests and needs of students as in the case in the topic on policing; students did not relate to the issues presented in the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book. Additionally, it is important to highlight that some topics in LINC resources were not raised as a topic of interest such as how Canadians celebrate birthdays and in fact, themes centered on *Canadian Culture* provoked contentious debates amongst participants. Lastly, a key topic that sparked a lot of interest amongst student participants involved obtaining Canadian citizenship which is not a direct focus in LINC programs.

The curricula, texts, and other resources available to me as an educator did not mention *doing* critical pedagogy as a best practice. For this reason, I had to essentially create *every* opportunity to do CP in the classroom. It was exhausting! I spent hours researching critical approaches and consistently second-guessed my unconventional ways of teaching in the classroom (Field Notes, May 13). I noted asking myself questions like, “Does this activity accurately reflect the *CLB*?”, “Is this what students want?”, “What will my colleagues think of me?”, “Will this really help them [students] in the real world?”, “How will I assess *this* [citizenship content] in the classroom?” I did not have support or resources to guide me; it felt like a daunting task and at times, I was ready to revert back to methods that were tried, tested, and accepted by the profession. It also did not help when student participants expected me to choose the content and had banking-like expectations. For example, when we were reflecting and discussing the topic of *Celebrations*, one student exclaimed, “What right do we have to say we

don't like it?" (Field Notes, May 22) or in the conversation on using L1 in the classroom, I was deemed to be the 'mother' in our classroom (Field Notes, May 16), someone who chose the content of the lessons and was expected to conduct the class authoritatively.

The findings suggest that teachers, students, administrators, and funders have the ability to *do* critical pedagogy, but because the structure of this program lacks resources and guidance in critical pedagogy, it would take substantial time, work, and dedication to implement. It is much simpler to photocopy an available resource that has clear instructions, answer keys, and complies with the *CLB* (2012). I found that while I was *doing* critical pedagogy in the classroom, my workload increased considerably, and I was met with adversity amongst my colleagues, student participants, and even *myself*.

As a person who values social justice principles, the development of critical approaches in the classroom came with my own personal engagement on the topic; not an idea that was presented to me by administration, available resources I had in the classroom, or from colleagues in the field. Furthermore, critical pedagogy was not an approach that I was trained on in my TESL teacher program, nor something I personally experienced in my own experiences as a student in the classroom. In this regard, there are potentials for implementing CP in the LINC classroom, but considerations to possibilities, time and effort were documented in the findings.

Critical Possibilities

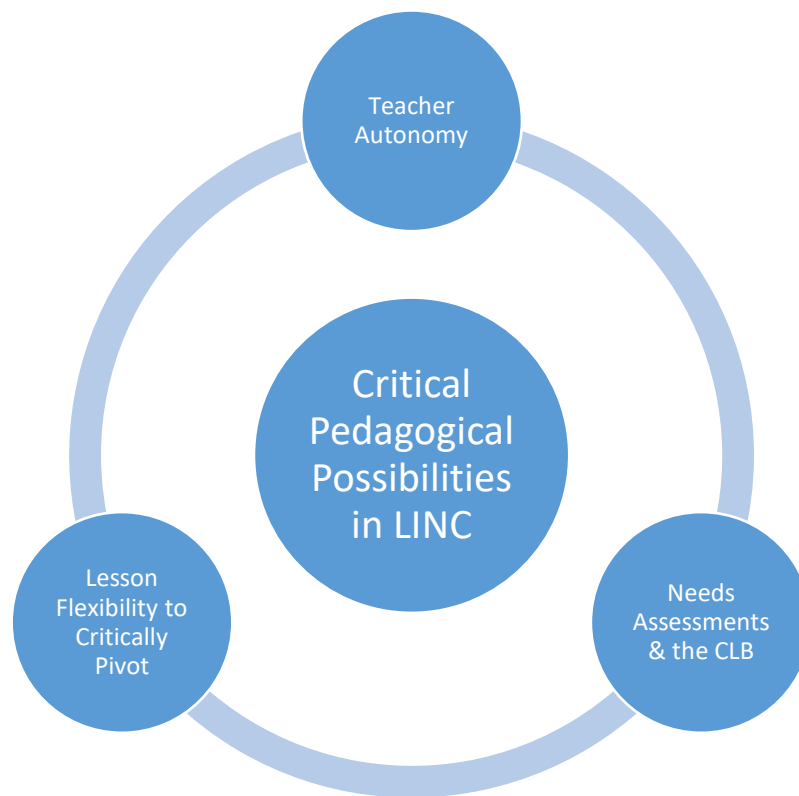
~The Glass is Half Full~

This section briefly discusses the ways in which I was able to adequately do critical pedagogical work in the classroom. It is brief because the findings of this research suggest that there are more barriers in adopting a critical pedagogical approach versus possibilities to be critically engaging.

There were three areas in which findings supported critical pedagogical approaches: the teacher having autonomy to implement critical practices, program flexibility to teach relevant topics by doing needs assessments, and the ability to critically adapt with ease the interactions and activities that took place in the classroom. Figure 12 provides a visual representation of these possibilities.

Figure 10

Overview of Critical Pedagogical Possibilities in LINC



Possibility #1: Teacher Autonomy

The findings support that indeed, LINC programs offer a significant amount of flexibility and teacher autonomy on how and what to teach, yet the lack of resources, support, and training make it particularly challenging to deviate from available resources.

As the teacher in this research, I was excited to implement teaching and learning that supported criticality and also, teaching topics that were of interest to student participants. However, I noted how time-consuming developing lessons and activities was because materials that support critical approaches are not readily available for teachers (Field Notes, June 7). Although there was flexibility to offer critical pedagogical approaches in the program, the amount of time to prepare lessons and content ‘from scratch’ exhausted me and over time, the passion and excitement I had in developing critical lessons faded. There was an abundance of books provided by my center to guide lessons and at times, I questioned why I should bother spending non-paid hours to create materials and content that supported critical learning; especially when students indicated that activities from published books counted as ‘real’ learning.

Each step to do more critical work involved challenges. When I created critical lessons, I had to think about how to develop the lesson, then, develop the lesson without already-made resources (or adapt resources), and ensure that they were crafted with appropriate CLB levels and assessment tasks. For example, when I developed the problem-posing activity where I showed students a picture of a parent-teacher interview and asked them questions about what they saw in the picture, it took me hours to prepare and a lot of second-guessing on my part if the content of the lesson met CLB levels adequately. I also noted the headspace involved in this process; rather than using a readily made resource such as the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book, which took hardly any thinking on my part, I had to constantly think about what to draw, what to ask, why this mattered, and how students would feel about my ‘handmade’ creation (Field Notes, June 7). I noted and reflected on how it left me exhausted and mentally drained. Overall, this lesson was received well and proved to be very critically engaging. The ability to

carry out this activity provided me and student participants with valuable understandings about a child's education from a multiplicity of perspectives that could not be discovered in available resources. For this reason, data collected indicates that LINC instructors can autonomously manage classroom discourses to support critical pedagogical approaches, but caution should be made to consider the time, effort, and validation involved in doing critical teaching and learning.

Possibility #2 Resources: Needs Assessment Practices & the CLB

LINC supports developing curricula according to the needs of its learners and this is guided by the *CLB* to measure levels of language proficiency. Teachers in our LINC program are able to create themes and topics by conducting a needs assessment with learners. The *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) offer various strategies to develop themes and topics with learners' needs in mind (see pp. 24-26 of the *Guidelines* for needs assessment suggestions). This allows for flexibility to design relevant topics to meet the needs of students. This attribute of LINC supports criticality because it invites learners to situate their learning according to their topics of interest; they are involved in the teaching and learning process. By conducting a needs assessment during this research study (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13), I was able to focus on topics students were most interested in learning about such as policing and citizenship.

Although the *CLB* has been criticized for its restrictive and disempowering content (Haque & Cray, 2007; Fleming, 2010), it is a useful tool to measure language skills for ESL learners. For example, I applied the CLB 1 speaking criteria when we developed questions for our guest police officer; student participants had to memorize questions, learn how to greet and respond to the officer, and acquire vocabulary related to the topic (Field Notes, June 11). In other words, critical work can be accomplished using the *CLB* document and can be a valuable aid in determining language levels.

Possibility #3 Flexibility to Critically Pivot

The operational term to critically pivot refers to having the ability to modify a lesson or classroom interaction with the aim to make it more critically engaging. This adjustment could be made while developing a lesson from an established resource or occurring in-the-moment when there is evidence that a critical shift is necessary. Decisions to critically pivot are guided by carefully observing contentious behaviours and interactions taking place in the classroom and by inviting problem-posing questioning to the lesson/interaction.

Findings shows that while carrying out the lessons from the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) resource, it was necessary to critically pivot in order to support critical pedagogical goals. The ability to modify lessons that had uncritical and/or irrelevant components provided student participants with more opportunities to share their knowledge and perspectives and pivot the lesson/interaction to a more critical pedagogical purpose. For example, when it became obvious that the content of policing in the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book was not ‘critically’ working out, I was able to change the content to something more meaningful and relevant to students’ lives (Field Notes, June 10). Another example that demonstrates when we critically pivoted was when we were doing the lesson on birthday celebrations from the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009). The conflict that arose on this topic ultimately ended the lesson and we were able to redirect our lesson to another topic (Field Notes, May 22). Without critically pivoting that lesson, students may have had to endure hours on a topic that did not serve their interests or beliefs.

In my reflections, I felt that I was adequately guided by deciding when to critically pivot as I drew on noticing the behaviours and interactions that were taking place in the classroom and, by inviting students to respond to my problem-posing questions. When there was evidence of the

absence of critical learning and teaching, I felt that I could easily pivot and recalibrate what we were doing in the class. I also noted the energy shift that transpired when we made these pivots; student participants started to pay attention and contribute more to what was going on in the classroom (Field Notes, June 11).

The findings suggest that teachers can easily critically pivot their lessons in a LINC program. However, since this is a new approach that came from this research study, it requires space to develop in the field.

Implications for Classroom Practice

This study demonstrates that teachers in LINC and other adult ESL programs can *do* critical pedagogy. The autonomy that I had in the classroom gave me the flexibility to implement teaching practices that transform learning to better reflect critical purposes. The flexibility to choose relevant topics by conducting needs assessments allows students to learn about topics that interest them, which support critical pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the ability to change content by critically pivoting allows for critical pedagogical goals that empower students in adult ESL programs. However, in order to complement what Canagarajah (2005) calls an “attitude” (p. 932) to critical teaching and learning, considerations of more practical aspects must be considered.

The findings in this research show that because there is a lack of resources, training, and overall support for *doing* critical pedagogical work, simply having the right *attitude* is not enough. When certain established practices, such as needs assessments are incorporated into program expectations, this supports a critical pedagogical approach because students are *choosing* what they want to learn. Ultimately, they are choosing their curriculum and what topics to learn about are important to them. Although a few strategies have benefitted critical

pedagogical approaches, such as Haque's (2007) 'tactics' of resistance, which involves taking advantage of opportunities as they arise in the classroom and manipulating the events in order to assist a more just outcome, further foundational support must be reflected in teacher-training programs, resources, and program policies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on the experiences and critically-oriented perspectives I have gained in this research study and may inform language teacher education, in-service professional development, and the need for long-term curricular change. I explore the potential transformations achievable at the grassroots level, aligning with the guiding framework of this study — classroom experiences with critical pedagogy from a teacher's viewpoint.

My observations and experiences in this research study indicate a need for a critical pedagogical approach in the restructuring of adult ESL programming, drawing upon established policies, resources, and curriculum documents to foster positive and critically-oriented social development among newcomers to Canada. It is essential that LINC programs include spaces for equal sharing of knowledges; the teaching and learning experiences should convey that *everyone's* culture and beliefs matter. This final chapter addresses hopes and possibilities for breaking the cycle of disempowerment experienced by many adult newcomers in government-funded adult ESL programming. The central focus of this study was embedded in the following research question:

What are the experiences and reflective perspectives of an ESL teacher implementing a critical pedagogy approach within an LINC/ESL classroom for adults with low proficiency in English?

Based on my experiences, observations, and interactions with student participants, this study suggests that there may be a range of critically-oriented possibilities for change. As this research study focused on me, the teacher-researcher, I first discuss opportunities for teachers since my experiences and the content of this research study are more closely tied with them, and

near the end of this chapter, I broaden my suggestions to embrace a range of stakeholders who are involved in adult ESL programming.

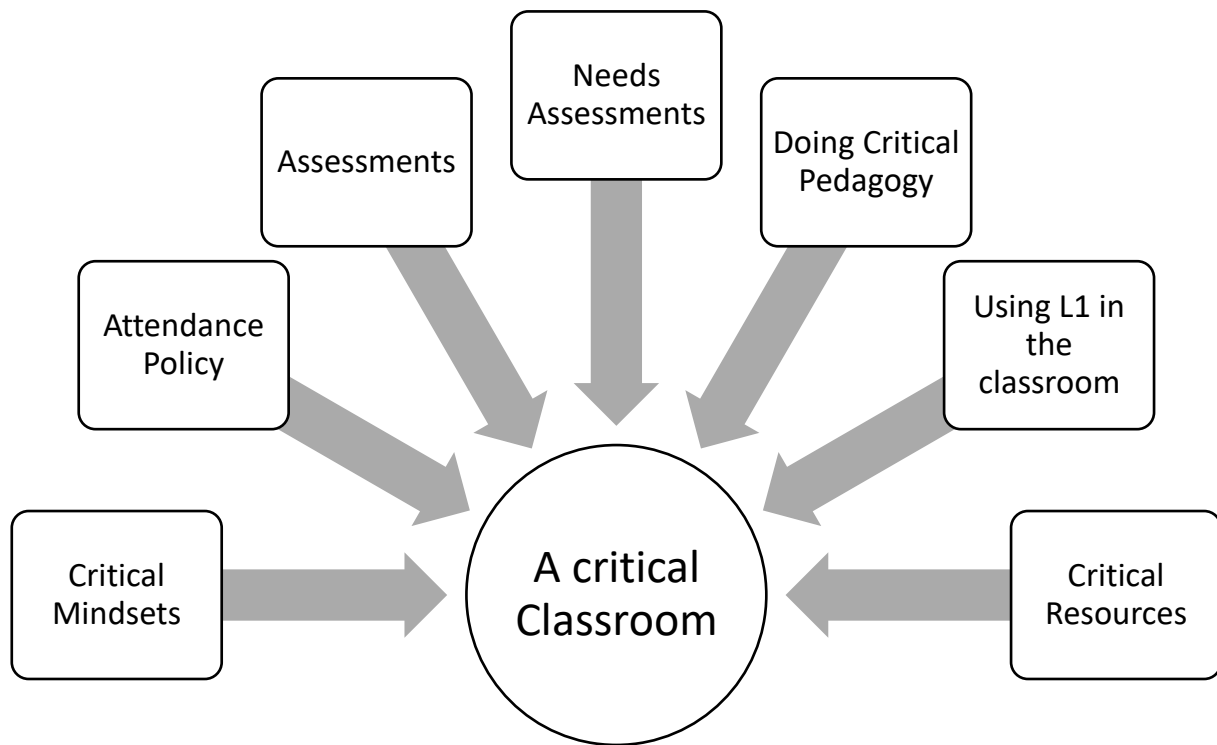
Critical Classroom Shifts for Teachers

While acknowledging the limitations of this study, confined to my personal experience as a teacher and surveying a small population of newcomers in LINC, my interactions with numerous ESL professionals over the past two decades indicate a shared desire among teachers to support newcomers in helping individuals adapt to a new language and culture, facilitating their successful integration into their new community. Nevertheless, through the reflective experiences and perspectives I encountered in this study, I have highlighted findings that demonstrate several constraints in approaching critical pedagogy in the classroom.

Based on what I have come to know and understand from this 7-week project of implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom, I developed seven subsections of ‘Critical Classroom Shifts’ that suggest how other teachers could consider improving adult ESL programming within a critical pedagogical approach framework. This is reflected in Figure 13. One may integrate these suggestions into their own teaching and learning practices by carefully considering the contextual relevance and pedagogical implications thereof. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of adult ESL programming and the diverse needs of learners, educators can selectively adopt and tailor these recommendations to suit their instructional objectives and student demographics. Moreover, by engaging in critical reflection and ongoing professional development, teachers can refine their instructional approaches and enhance the critical efficacy of their pedagogical interventions. Thus, the insights gathered from this research offer a basis for transformative pedagogy that can be readily adapted and implemented within diverse educational contexts.

Figure 11

Critical Classroom Shifts



In each subsection I have also included a section titled, ‘Fostering Hope for Change.’ In these passages, I expand on possibilities for critical reform outside of the classroom. These ideas stem from the experiences and reflections that took place in the classroom during this research study and inspire to broaden the critical pedagogical landscape.

Critical Mindsets

The study suggests that while there is potential for critical growth, the teaching/learning framework observed remains rooted in a relatively static, socio-historical, and dated model. My research further suggests that approaches to teaching stem from a broader system framed in banking models of education (Freire, 1970). Both student participants and I had limiting beliefs about creating an empowering classroom that stemmed from our backgrounds. This research highlights that through activities like problem-posing and developing better understandings of

critical social consciousness (Freire, 1970), changes to what adult ESL education looks like and how it is implemented can occur. As such, teachers are encouraged to stretch their imaginations healthily, envisioning classroom spaces that promote the growth of empowering practices for newcomers.

My experience of *doing* critical pedagogy was hampered by my perceptions that the funding would be cut for my program, and my own fears of the financial implications that action would cause me personally (Field Notes, June 18). Furthermore, because lesson and resource preparation time is not funded, I was required to develop my pedagogical materials on my own time and at my own expense, which resulted in a financial deficit for me. My feelings and experience corroborate Haque and Cray's (2007) finding that significant unpaid time was necessary to develop teaching materials conducive to critical pedagogy, often occurring outside of scheduled class times. These instances impede developing a critical mindset. Furthermore, the constant worry about government representatives conducting physical headcounts in classrooms added pressure, as insufficient attendance could jeopardize program funding and the job security of program staff. These challenges underscore the need for advocacy, as they directly impact job security and working conditions, ultimately affecting program operations. Such factors hinder the exploration of new and critical teaching methods in the classroom.

Fostering Hope for Change: Mindsets

The onus of breaking banking models of education (Freire, 1970) can include initiatives by government decision-makers, teacher-training programs, and content developers in LINC programs as they are key agents in fostering a critical adult ESL pedagogy. Furthermore, teachers need support from government and administration when they experiment with critical pedagogical approaches. This includes, first and foremost, financial compensation, as well as

training and access to resources that support critical pedagogical approaches. For example, LINC funding used to provide financial conference support for LINC instructors to attend the TESL Ontario annual conference. These conferences offer professional development and presentations related to current research, including literature presented in this study. Additional benefits include networking with other ESL professionals and exchanging ideas with other attendees. Unfortunately, conference funding was cut in recent years by the federal government, and many LINC instructors are unable to attend TESL Ontario's annual conference due to out-of-pocket costs and obligations to work on the days the conference is held.

Attendance Policy

The findings of my research highlight that teachers grapple with numerous program expectations, including strict adherence to policies such as the attendance policy, which impedes critical approaches to teaching and learning. This study further supports other research that suggests there is a hidden agenda at play in government directives in adult ESL programming (Fleming, 2015). The findings in this research suggest that dominant cultural discourses are present in program policies like the attendance policy. These policies often overlook core cultural values and the constraints faced by student participants such as family obligations, attending appointments during school hours, and health-related concerns. Based on my reflections and observations, it appears that adhering to the mandatory 70% attendance policy poses an unjust demand for numerous newcomers who are resettling in a new country. These individuals grapple with unfamiliar circumstances while striving to maintain regular school attendance (Field Notes, June 17). My insights, encounters, and contemplations align with Frye's (1999) research, which promotes increased adaptability in attendance policies within community adult ESL classrooms. This research suggests that the pressure to align with program and policy

expectations, without deviating from the status quo, negatively impacts the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of both students and teachers. In light of these findings, teachers are urged to advocate for a better understanding of their students' challenges with attendance and communicate these situations to program and policy makers. A deeper understanding could potentially lead to more flexibility and accommodations in attendance policies, similar to the adjustments made during the COVID pandemic. In this instance, adjustments to the Attendance Policy were devised to accommodate alternative modes of learning, such as online and hybrid formats, as well as providing more flexibility for completing tasks outside of traditional school hours. My research suggests that adaptability is essential to uphold consistent attendance, and the array of delivery modalities encountered during the pandemic could aid in shaping such versatile course delivery alternatives (Cummings & Fayed, 2022).

Fostering Hope for Change: Attendance Policy

At the core of adult ESL programming are government decision-makers, and they must rethink their overall goals in adult ESL programs to include mutual knowledge-sharing and equitable values among newcomers and citizens of Canada. Government policies and expectations must reflect notions of holistic inclusivity and equity. Critical pedagogical approaches are a viable way to guide such initiatives and influence policies, including the attendance policy.

A recent report completed by IRCC's Research and Evaluation branch (Immigration, Refugees, & Citizenship Canada, 2020) notes that some of the barriers in LINC programs with regard to attendance includes childcare and employment related issues. The report notes that LINC students have challenges in attending because they lack access to childcare, and also, they need to earn wages to support themselves and their families in addition to attending LINC

programs. For these reasons, the IRCC report notes that attendance is compromised although despite these highlighted issues, this document indicates that 70% attendance has still been still maintained in LINC programs. This funding model thus creates a barrier that is reflected in the adopted Attendance Policy.

The findings in my research also highlight childcare and employment-related barriers, but my qualitative approach has critically examined attendance to produce a more robust understanding of the situation. My findings report that childcare is one factor in an overarching idea of family commitments and priorities. IRCC's findings fail to acknowledge the importance of family roles to adults in LINC programs, which compromises students' attendance. Additionally, in contrast to the findings of IRCC's report, attendance in this study fell well below 70%. If in fact, attendance was accurately portrayed in IRCC's report (noting late students, or students leaving early), I wonder about the stress and anxiety this criterion had caused students and LINC staff as it did in my study.

Lastly, given the innovative teaching and learning approaches necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic in educational settings over the past few years, these newly established affordances could be explored for students facing challenges attending in-person classes during traditional school hours.

Assessment

My experience of administering assessments revealed that both the student participants and I felt a high degree of stress during the activity (Field Notes, June 18). These findings demonstrate that assessments can be a highly stressful environment for students and teachers alike. The standard assessment tool and method I used and reflected upon in this study uncovered Freire's (1970) banking concept of education, which created a significant power imbalance

between me, the teacher, and students. Based on my own experience, it would be prudent for teachers to seek out ways to assess their students in situations that are not highly formalized and tactfully implement strategies to gauge students' proficiency levels without inducing undue stress and anxiety.

Fostering Hope for Change: Assessments

Assessment practices remain integral to program policies, as reinforced in the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) Guidelines (2019). Instructors are mandated to assign CLB levels with 8-10 assessments in each skill: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Program policies should consider professional judgments as sound evidence for assigning CLB levels and re-evaluate the high number of assessments teachers are required to provide before assigning a student a CLB level. This request was previously addressed in Haque and Cray's (2007) survey many years ago, advocating for the inclusion of professional judgment as a factor in assigning CLB levels.

Needs Assessments

The findings of this research suggest that by conducting a needs assessment, content geared towards students' interests were supported. For example, student participants were keen on learning topics from the *LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) including shopping, banking, and going to the doctor (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13). They expressed an interest in most of the topics that complement much of the material I have acquired for the class. This approach to adult ESL programming is a practice already supported in LINC programming, allowing teachers to build on a curriculum that is relevant to the specific needs of their students.

This need for relevance was well illustrated in this study: while administering the needs assessment, and through interactions with student participants, it was evident that many students

wanted to learn content about Canada as they were keenly focused on applying for Canadian citizenship and taking the citizenship test (Classroom Memorabilia, May 13).

Fostering Hope for Change: Needs Assessments

With the pressures of creating standards and uniformity, it is my hope that LINC programs maintain aspects of developing needs assessments for their clients and that this practice be supported in LINC classrooms across the country.

In addition, although acquiring citizenship is not directly related to LINC programming, the application process for citizenship includes documentation acquired from LINC programs for proof of language proficiency and like LINC, is accountable by IRCC. Therefore, decisions on incorporating citizenship into LINC programs should be considered. For these reasons, I believe teachers should be mindful of students' goals and consider teaching more citizenship content in their classrooms as a mean for students to achieve their goals as this goal helps students obtain equal participation in Canadian societies.

Doing Critical Pedagogy

It is unclear how many LINC instructors across the country are familiar with *doing* critical pedagogy in their classroom. The research in this study shows that although I was familiar with critical pedagogy and its approaches, it was not something student participants were used to. As this study was limited to me, but I would be hesitant to assume that this is a commonly used approach in LINC.

This study outlines that teachers must have the flexibility in their practices to embrace and grow with the philosophies embedded in a critical pedagogical approach. Possibilities to enhance this come from being engaged in TESL communities and expanding one's knowledge to broader disciplines. Since conducting this study, I continue to keep an open mind and embrace

differences. For this reason, despite a positionality that frames me as a colonizer with a privileged identity, I have spent years listening to the voices of people who are different from me and finding ways to change my practice to become a more informed *transformative* educator. These methods of change are best expressed in Freire's (1970) ideas of problem-posing and being *willing* to adapt and change as to embrace a society that promotes equality.

Fostering Hope: Doing Critical Pedagogy

It is imperative that people in positions of developing training programs, professional development, and resources support and advocate on behalf of a critical pedagogical approach. Without such support, teachers struggle to implement critical pedagogy into their teaching. With regard to my role as a participant teacher in this research, I noticed that at times, I struggled *doing* critical pedagogy. I reflected that this was because I have had minimal training and professional development to support critical pedagogical approaches. Despite my desire to be a 'critical pedagogue,' I discovered that because I did not have the necessary repertoire of methods, my 'attitude' sometimes shifted to do what I know, which reflected banking models of education (Freire, 1970). In order for educators to *do* critical pedagogical work, teacher-training programs and professional development opportunities must provide for critical pedagogy training. This is fundamental for critical teaching and learning.

Using L1 in the Classroom

The findings of this research demonstrate the benefits of fostering classroom spaces where students' linguistic identities accompany them into the classroom. For this reason, teachers should create opportunities within the classroom for everyone to engage in dialogue about the importance of using one's L1 and why it holds value for them. Although this study

included only one other collective L1 of student participants, it shed light on why using L1 was important for them in the classroom while also acknowledging how it made others feel.

Fostering Hope for Change: Using L1 in the Classroom

While research has distinctly demonstrated the value of translanguaging usage in the classroom (Kaiper-Marquez, 2023), it would be beneficial if there were a concrete consensus in the adult ESL community regarding the benefits of students having access to their L1 in classroom spaces. Despite the growing body of evidence supporting translanguaging, there remains a lack of uniform agreement among educators and policymakers on how to effectively implement and support these practices. Establishing a unified stance could lead to more consistent and effective teaching strategies, improved resource allocation, and a more inclusive learning environment that acknowledges and leverages students' linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, a consensus could facilitate professional development and training programs, helping instructors to better understand and apply translanguaging techniques, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes for adult ESL learners.

Critical Resources

Findings suggest that teachers must approach resources with a high degree of criticality and/or commit themselves to developing resources that critically serve students' best interests. In the spirit of participatory action research (PAR), developing resources with students can be extremely beneficial. For example, rich and relevant content was created in the Police Activity, during which students and I developed questions for our guest police officer. Additionally, when student participants and I were tasked with a problem-posing activity (as modeled by Wallerstein and Auerbach, 2004), the content we co-constructed for a parent-teacher interview provided

relevant details for a real-world task. There are many ways to create and adapt resources with a critical pedagogical outlook in mind.

Fostering Hope for Change: Critical Resources

The availability of resources in any educational program holds significant power and control. In LINC, this entailed teaching resources, curricula, and the *CLB* (2012). Research has shown that many teachers rely on available resources to guide their teaching because they do not have the time nor the compensation to develop and create their own resources (Haque & Cray, 2007). The findings from my research confirm that indeed creating new content to support a critical pedagogical approach is a daunting task. It is extremely time-consuming and mentally exhausting because the teacher needs to ensure that the content is appropriate, and that it aligns with the *CLB* (2012). I reflected that I did a lot of second-guessing when I was developing critical content, and there were limited resources to guide me. It is easier to simply photocopy an available resource and follow the instructions in the book than to develop a new pedagogy.

Research also indicates that resources for teaching fail to support critical pedagogical goals, but rather position students passively (Haque & Cray, 2007; Fleming, 2010). My research demonstrates that available resources such as the *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) book fail to support critical pedagogical goals. Rather, they gear teaching to reflect banking models of education (Freire, 1970); teachers are expected to teach prescribed content without student input.

Other recent unpublished study conducted to inform a new national LINC curriculum concludes that there is a need for educators to be better trained in inclusion, critical pedagogy, and intercultural education (Lawrence, Valeo, & Irwin, 2020)

The qualities of a critical pedagogical approach include cultivating opportunities for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and empowering change. This research shows that problem-

posing and critical pivoting may provide opportunities for critical pedagogical teaching and learning. When lessons are developed to reflect inclusiveness and diversity, the teaching and learning environment is critically transformed. As this study has suggested, these fundamental aspects of critical pedagogy are lacking in training and resources, and there needs to be directives to guide educators toward critical approaches and resources.

Recommendations for a Pedagogy of Hope

Language is viewed as a “social phenomenon that is constructive of reality, social relations and identities as well as intimately connected to issues of power and ideology” (Clarke & Morgan, 2011, p. 66). It is a fundamental skill for newcomers to Canada, crucial for their social integration, education, and employment. Adult ESL students are at risk of becoming passive citizens like their immigrant predecessors (Derwing, 2017; Fleming, 2010) because of how policies, ideologies, and resources are experienced in the classroom. From a teacher’s critical stance, this research study has uncovered many ways in which language programming instrumentally impacts the language teaching experience as well as the learning experiences of newcomers in a LINC program.

I mirror Freire’s (1970) ideas of hope in humanity and the goal of fostering an equal and just society. The following recommendations serve as an invitation for specific groups of people to further their research and inquiries, aiming to enhance a program that, despite its current limitations, remains a valuable tool to assist many new immigrants in settling fairly into Canadian society. I call on the following groups to enhance LINC programs by bringing a more critical perspective to their work: government decision-makers; teacher trainers, professional associations, and resource developers; researchers; students in adult ESL programs; and the broader community.

Recommendations for Government Decision Makers

The primary avenue for implementing critical pedagogy in LINC programs lies with government decision-makers who determine the policies and guidelines to be followed. These recommendations are informed by the firsthand experiences and perspectives gained through this research study, which advocates for a critical pedagogical approach.

The data in this research shows that dominant cultural discourses are present in program policies and resources, creating a hidden agenda (Fleming, 2015). This was evident when I followed the *LINC classroom activities: Language instruction for newcomers to Canada: LINC 1 (2009)* book and topics of celebrations were only of interest to two student participants. For this reason, government decision makers must rethink their overall goals in these types of programs to fund content that supports mutual knowledge-sharing and equitable values amongst newcomers and citizens of Canada; government policies and expectations must reflect notions of holistic inclusivity and equality. Critical pedagogical approaches are a viable way to guide such initiatives. Thus, promoting these approaches throughout LINC programs should be conveyed in government policy so that by ascribing to a new ideological shift, criticality can have an impact on all facets of adult ESL programming.

Additionally, a recent report completed by IRCC's Research and Evaluation branch (2020) notes that barriers in LINC programs with regard to attendance are childcare and employment related. The report notes that LINC students have challenges in attending because they lack access to childcare, and also, need to earn wages to support themselves and their families in addition to attending LINC programs. The data in my research shares childcare and employment-related barriers, but my qualitative approach has critically examined attendance to produce a more robust understanding of the situation. My findings suggest that childcare is one

factor in an overarching idea of family commitments and priorities. For example, during a classroom discussion, one student participant indicated that she could not attend school because she had to prepare her house for guests. IRCC's findings fail to acknowledge the importance family roles are to the people who attend LINC programs, which compromises students' attendance.

In 2010, another evaluative report on LINC was completed by IRCC (Evaluation of Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program). This report highlights how cost-effective LINC is, and measures this by ascribing a monetary amount to each student in the program. The report fails to consider the critical achievements students have made in LINC; they are simply a commodity to prove their worth by benchmark progression. These types of reports lack insight into ways to support newcomers to become active and equal members of society. This gap has drastic consequences on how programs are run, and what ideas are valued in LINC. My research demonstrates how the current funding model is experienced by LINC students and teachers, and how it devalues critical pedagogical goals. For example, I reflected on the stress and anxiety I experienced knowing that at any given time, a government official could walk into my classroom and report on my low attendance. Additionally, I felt compelled to implement assessment practices that fit the expectations of the government rather than focus on teaching and learning. It would be beneficial for LINC funding models to consider critical changes to better serve its clients and instructors.

Additionally, from conducting a needs assessment, many students wanted support from the program to help them gain Canadian citizenship and to receive the necessary proof of language proficiency. This requires learning content from the study guide and developing strategies to pass the citizenship test. Although acquiring citizenship is not directly related to

LINC programming, the application process for citizenship includes documentation acquired from LINC programs for proof of language proficiency and like LINC, is monitored by IRCC. Therefore, more critically-oriented decisions on incorporating citizenship content into LINC programs should be considered by government decision makers.

From my years of experience as an ESL teacher, I have come to understand that we are the ‘front-line workers,’ and the heart of LINC programs. As the teacher in this research, I have experienced that the ESL teachers are the ones who intimately connect to students and listen to their hopes and dreams. During this research study, I spend an abundant amount of uncompensated time developing critically-oriented lessons. I also adapted lessons and policies to foster inclusive teaching and learning spaces, and most importantly, developed a deep understanding of the challenges students and their families face settling into a new country. Subsequently, it is my belief that funding conditions must include fair pay and compensation to teachers who dedicate a significant amount of time and effort to support newcomers in their goals; especially when implementing critical teaching and learning. It is my opinion that teachers need job security and income that reflect the education and expertise of teachers in building a nation of critical citizens. This study highlights my passion to critically facilitate a learning environment despite the lack of reasonable pay, job security, work benefits, and supportive working conditions.

Recommendations for Teacher Trainers; Professional Associations, and Resource Developers

Based on my experience and critical reflections from this study, teacher education programs, professional associations, and resource developers involved in language teacher development may want to consider supporting a critical pedagogical approach. Without such support, teachers struggle to implement critical pedagogy in their teaching.

TESOL programs serve as a valuable starting point for new teachers to build their understanding of pedagogical theory and practice. For this reason, there would be significant value in TESOL programs to enact critical action-oriented training within their future classes. The need for critically-oriented training could encompass the development of strategies to foster critical awareness, critical self-reflection, and critical pedagogical relations (Hawkins & Norton, 2009), as well as to debunk white privilege (Faust, 2016). This is fundamental for critical teaching and learning.

Moreover, professional association conferences provide teachers with a diverse selection of books and resources, directly aiding in their ongoing professional growth and enhancing their teaching methodologies. The availability of resources in any educational program holds significant power and control. In LINC, this entails teaching resources, curricula, and the CLB (2012), which are on display during TESOL conferences. Research has shown that many teachers rely on available resources to guide their teaching because they do not have the time or the compensation to develop and create their own resources (Haque & Cray, 2007). It is easier to simply photocopy an available resource and follow the instructions in the book than to develop a new pedagogy.

Research also indicates that resources for teaching fail to support critical pedagogical goals, but rather position students passively (Haque & Cray, 2007; Fleming, 2010). More recently, Desyatova's (2020) work highlights how LINC instructors continue to lack the ability to critically examine government program implementation, which according to their research, has swayed in a direction that does not support critical pedagogical practices. As a result, even teachers who want to implement critical pedagogical practices in their classroom are discouraged due to top-down government initiatives. Desyatova's (2020) report mirrors my experiences in

this study and suggests a dire outlook for critical pedagogical approaches in adult ESL programming without the critically-oriented support of policy changes and language teacher education.

Recommendations for Researchers

Critical or participatory action research are becoming increasingly more popular in the field of education (Jacobs, 2018). The main premise of this type of research is to unravel power dynamics, transform inequities, reshape social environments, and empower participants (Maguire, 1987). PAR is an important means of challenging disempowering practices as well as legitimizing relevant knowledge.

While researchers, including PhD students like me, are required to follow formal guidelines, and are held accountable by review boards, critical research can also entail more informal methods as a way to critically transform the classroom. Indeed, this critical research approach has been described as a “habit of inquiry” (Pine, p. 30, 2009) and reflects an interventionist “attitude” to teaching (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 932). The continuous process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014) in PAR and critical pedagogical approaches transform the classroom. In addition, a practitioner inquiry approach can also shift the habits and mindsets in a more informal way to critically transform teaching spaces. Educators outside of adult ESL classrooms have already adopted this approach as a way to better their practice (Hall & Wall, 2015). Practitioner inquiry can lend itself as a habit and attitude in adult ESL programs to critically transform the classroom. Educators can adapt practitioner inquiry to their teaching practice by critically questioning, reflecting, and thinking about how they can improve their pedagogy. Although findings in this type of informal research will not be subjected to the same high degree of scrutiny as scholarly research, this research can

undoubtedly contribute to critical transformation in the classroom. This knowledge might not be shared in traditional spaces such as conferences but can be shared through social media platforms and even the school lunchroom, making discussions and changes possible. I challenge everyone to become a researcher and while doing so, reflect, share, and discuss opportunities for empowerment for all.

Recommendations for Students

As a federally funded program, LINC programs are offered to all eligible newcomers. It is not uncommon for a LINC class to have many students from different parts of the world, similar to this study that encompassed participants from seven different countries. This diversity allows for opportunities for everyone in the classroom to learn and embrace difference. However, teaching and learning approaches must support mutual respect of the languages and cultures students bring to the classroom. This study demonstrated opportune moments in the classroom for students and me to share, honour, and accept others' perspectives and attitudes toward learning. For example, diverse opinions regarding the use of L1 in the classroom were evident, with not everyone in agreement. Despite this, L1 rules were collaboratively agreed upon through compromise, demonstrating a mutual respect for the ultimate decision reached. On the other hand, there were moments when students ascribed to the banking model by harshly telling classmates to simply do what they are told. In these cases, critical learning was compromised by student participants. Students are an essential part of critical change. For example, they can establish spaces within the classroom to express their ideas and values, as illustrated in this research study. This was reflected in my research as I relied heavily on asking student participants problem-posing questions (Freire, 1970), and more specifically, when I implemented a problem-posing technique adopted by Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004) to foster shared

knowledge among students. By gaining shared knowledge with student participants, I was better able to develop critical social consciousness (Freire, 1970), a key goal in critical pedagogical approaches.

Recommendations for the Broader Community

People are the controlling forces of social development. Historically, adult ESL programming was founded in overt racial discourses (Derwing, 2017), which aimed to assimilate newcomers to a British-based version of Canada that was white, Anglo-Saxon, and obedient (Li, 2003). More recently, these sentiments are displayed in more covert initiatives, but as this study demonstrates, still exist. The beliefs, policies, and texts within adult ESL programming perpetuate dominant discourses and as a result, hinder the equitable and egalitarian opportunities of many newcomers who enrol in adult ESL programs. However, individuals possess the capacity to contribute to breaking down barriers that impact social justice and critical transformations. There is an abundance of possibilities for the broader community to establish critical social consciousness among people (Freire, 1970). For example, organizations and workplaces can encourage employees and clients on critical thinking and discussion about privilege, power dynamics, and stereotypes. This may involve implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives, conducting bias training, and enforcing anti-discrimination policies. Additionally, broader communities can ensure diverse representation in media, government, education, and other influential sectors. The possibilities are endless and necessary to break down the barriers in adult ESL programming.

Considerations for Future Research

Although it was not the focus of this research, students often shared experiences in the class that are widely recognized as mental health triggers. For example, many students have

come from war-torn countries and witnessed people dying, including close family members. It was heart-breaking to hear these stories, and I cannot imagine how those experiences could not have resulted in post-traumatic stress disorders, or other mental illnesses caused by trauma.

Most teachers are not trained or qualified to support newcomers with trauma or abuse. However, I have no doubt that issues such as war-trauma and domestic abuse impact students' mental health and their ability to learn. Although this study does not consider poor mental health as a factor for lack of attendance, or how domestic abuse impacts critical learning, it is worth noting that more research in these two areas is needed within the context of adult ESL programs. Critical pedagogy supports a just and equitable learning environment for all students, and in order to create that environment, I believe it is essential to consider all aspects of students as human beings, and that includes attending to their emotional and mental health needs as well as their learning needs. Based on my experience with students like Ahlam, the implications of trauma in adult ESL classrooms need to be addressed so that educational spaces are safe and comfortable for learning and connecting rather than being an additional source of stress. Recent research (Eamer et al., 2022; Scarff, et al., 2023) has illustrated how trauma impacts language learners' abilities to show up in classrooms and how it affects their attendance. It is imperative that this research is considered and prioritized so that learners can be considered more than seats in a classroom. Further research is greatly needed in how government and language training providers can better consider ways to support students who come with traumatic backgrounds that impede their ability to learn and prevent them from benefitting from critical pedagogy.

Imagining Amira in a Critical LINC Classroom

This dissertation began with a fictitious tale about a woman named Amira and some critical struggles in a LINC program. This dissertation ends imagining Amira's life post-study

where critical pedagogical approaches have triumphed in LINC. This fictitious tale is inspired by the brave experiences shared in this research and conveys the possibilities of integrating critical pedagogical approaches in the adult ESL classroom.

Amira

Amira has graduated from the LINC program! Her experiences as a student in the program have enabled her to receive her Canadian citizenship and have also prepared her to integrate into Canadian society as an active and equal member. During Amira's time in LINC, policies and staff cultivated spaces for her values, culture, L1, and beliefs to be included, validated, and normalized. Her knowledge had equal status in the classroom and at times, was supported with the help of interpreters or smart technologies in and outside of the classroom. In fact, her L1 was often spoken in the classroom when she needed clarification, or to convey cultural exchanges. It excited her when LINC staff would greet her in her language as it gave her a sense of belonging. These practices helped normalize her L1 and supported the vision of multicultural Canada.

With her experience as a student in LINC, Amira's relationships with her family and community shifted as it allowed her to become more confident and truer to herself. Her outlook on living in Canada changed too, and because she began this journey with opportunities to share who she was, she felt that she was truly part of Canada's mosaic, and not simply a subject as in the melting-pot metaphor. She was excited to imagine the possibilities of *being* Canadian; whatever that meant to *her*.

The 'Mother' in Me – A Final Reflection

The path of *doing* critical pedagogy is embedded in an unjust world. My approach to critically transform a classroom was/is entrenched in ideologies that perpetuate dominant

discourses and requires continuous reflection and engagement by all stakeholders. I am thankful for the wisdom of the ‘father’ of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, who used education as a means to critically effect social changes and shared valuable insights in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970).

When I conducted my research, I was taken aback when a student called me the ‘mother’ of the class. For the students in our class, this role portrayed a sense of wisdom and knowing, and did not reflect the critical pedagogical role I initially inspired to be. I wanted students and I to regard each other as equals; people in a space who could share knowledge and ideas. I did not want to be a mother to students probably any more than Freire wanted to be regarded as the father of critical pedagogy. These terms are counterintuitive to *doing* critical pedagogy, yet we live in a complex society of disempowering and subjective ways of looking at the world.

However, if the expression, ‘mother knows best’ rings true (as student participants had depicted me in this research as noted in my Field Notes, May 15 & May 22), then this experience has significantly opened my eyes to my role in the classroom. I can either perpetuate disempowering practices, which support colonial discourses, or I can explore ways to bring criticality to the classroom. I will forever be a student of learning how to *do* critical pedagogy in a framework that honours others’ knowledges and wisdoms. Like Freire (1970), I believe in hope; hope in humanity and love.

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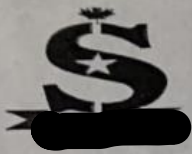
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Appendix A: Program Attendance Policy



[REDACTED] LINC Attendance Policy

1. You must come to school EVERYDAY. School hours are from 9-2:30. You must attend REGULARLY and FULL TIME.
2. You must come ON TIME. If you are later than 9:30 am, you will be asked to wait until the first break (10:45) to enter class.
3. If you are absent for more than THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS, you must provide a note from your doctor explaining your absence.
4. If you are absent, you must call the school [REDACTED]

Failure to follow to above policy will result in:

1. A verbal warning from the LINC Coordinator [REDACTED]
2. A written warning.
3. At this point if you still are not following the above policy, you will be dismissed from the school.

I understand the [REDACTED] LINC Attendance Policy:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Student Participant Information Form

Date: _____

Participant information form:

1. First name: _____

2. Last name: _____

3. Address: _____

4. Phone number: _____

5. Cell phone number: _____

6. Where are you from?: _____

7. When did you arrive to Canada?

8. When did you start taking LINC classes?

9. Do you have a job? _____

10. Are you married? _____

11. How old are you? _____

12. Who do you live with? _____

13. Do you have children? _____

14. How many children do you have? _____

15. What languages do you speak?

Appendix C: Sample Needs Assessments (Followed with Discussions)

Date: Monday May 13 2013

Questions about speaking English!



1. Where do you speak English?

bank ☺ school ☺ teacher bus drivers phone 911 landlord	shopping ☺ immigration off. ☺ hospital dentist dr off. ☺	laundry room LING shopping food parking lot
---	--	--



2. Who do you speak English with?

doctor ☺ friends ☺ taxi drivers pharmacist lawyers	people in the laundry room kids' teachers cashier students in school ☺
--	---

Date: Monday May 13, 2013

Questions about speaking English!



1. Where do you speak English?

1) LINC school ☺ 2) shopping ☺ 3) phone 911 4) lawyer's office 5) dr. office ☺	6) dentist office 7) hospital 8) bank ☺ 9) immigration office ☺ 10) food shopping 11) parking lot 12) bus ☺
--	---



2. Who do you speak English with?

1) teacher ☺ 2) kids' teacher ☺ 3) student in school ☺ 4) lawyers 5) bank tellers ☺ 6) pharmacist	7) doctor 8) cashier 9) bus drivers ☺ 10) manager
--	--

Appendix C: Sample Needs Assessments (Followed with Discussions)

Needs Assessment: What Do You Want to Learn About?

What do you want to learn about?
1 I want to learn about speaking English
2 I want to learn about citizenship.
3 I want to learn about go to the Doctor
4 I want to learn about education.
5 I want to learn about reading the paper

I want to learn about citizenship.
I want to learn about education.
I want to learn about Canadian Law.

Appendix D: Participant Questionnaire on L1 in the Classroom

Number	Question
1	Do you think L1 (first language) should be used in the classroom?
2	Under what circumstances is it acceptable to use L1 in the classroom?
3	When do people in the class use their L1?
4	How can using L1 in the classroom help with learning?
5	How can using L1 in the classroom hinder learning?
6	In what ways is it a good idea to use L1 in the classroom?
7	In what ways is it problematic to use L1 in the classroom?
8	What should be the "rule" for L1 usage in the classroom?
9	How do you feel about using your language in the classroom?
10	How do you feel about others using their language in the classroom?
11	How do you feel about using your language in Canada?
12	Where do you speak your language?
13	Who do you speak your language with?
14	(Added by Somali students) Do students ever use Somali "inappropriately" in class? Why?
15	(Added by Somali students) Do students feel like they are allowed to speak their language in class?

Appendix E: Student Participant Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

Study Name: Critical Moments in LINC Classrooms

Researcher: Christine Smart-Wiseman
PhD Candidate, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, S561 Ross
York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3
cwiseman@yorku.ca
[Redacted]

Purpose of the Research:

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: From May-June, 2013 during class time (9 am-2:30 pm), you will be asked to participate in learning practices reflected in a critical pedagogical approach. This approach supports active participation and equality in learning. This research will be conducted during class time and no additional hours are expected to be required.

Risks and Discomforts: We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: This study hopes to improve ESL programming for newcomers to Canada.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the nature of your relationship with the researcher, Christine Smart-Wiseman and York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Data will be collected in handwritten/typed note form. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information. Data will be stored for 5 years after the completion of the project and shredded/destroyed thereafter. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Brian Morgan either by telephone at (416) 736 2100, extension 88390 or by e-mail (bmorgan@glendon.yorku.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca). [Redacted]

Legal Consent and Signatures:

I, _____, consent to participate in **Critical Moments in LINC Classrooms** conducted by Christine Smart-Wiseman. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Participant

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Principal Investigator

Appendix F: Letter to ‘Helpers’

To whom it may concern,

My name is Christine and _____ is a student in my class. S/he has consented to participating in some research I am doing in my class. I am a PhD student at York University and am collecting data on an attempt to improve ESL programming in Canada. I want to better understand the needs and barriers adult ESL students have in integrating into Canadian society.

Part of my data collection involves interviewing participants. I would like to ask if you are willing to help me in this process? Your role would be to assist in translating responses. I want to ensure that my participants clearly understand the questions.

Feel free to contact me via email with any questions or concerns you may have. My email is cwiseman@yorku.ca.

If you are able to assist, please provide me with your contact information.

Thanks!

Christine Smart-Wiseman

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Appendix G: LINC Classroom Activities (2009) pp. 121-123

CANADIAN CULTURE



Activity:

When Is Your Birthday?

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Learners dictate and write birthdates.

Timing: 30 minutes

- WARM-UP**
- Begin with a general class discussion of birthday celebrations:
 - ~ Do you celebrate your birthday?
 - ~ Do you send cards, give presents, bake a cake, blow out candles?
 - ~ Do you know what people do in Canada when someone has a birthday?
 - Write the 12 months of the year on the blackboard. Draw attention to the capitalization, and model the pronunciation.
- ACTIVITY**
- Distribute the worksheets.
 - Instruct learners to stand up, one by one. First they spell their name. Then they say, "My birthday is on ..." while their classmates write the correct month and number.
- FOLLOW-UP**
- Drill the exercise orally for added practice, for example, "When is Li's birthday?"
 - Learners write the dates of two other friends or family members.
 - *Birthday Interview*
 - *A Birthday Party*
- VARIATION**
- This activity can be adjusted to teach or practice the *th* sound. Introduce the ordinal numbers (1st – 31st) and write them on the blackboard. Learners dictate their birthdays with the ordinal number ("My birthday is on July 9th").
- ASSESSMENT**
- Instructors circulate for informal assessment of listening and speaking.
 - CLB Performance Indicators:
 - ~ comprehends requests for personal details
 - ~ comprehends numbers, time, dates and letters
 - ~ greets familiar and unfamiliar people
 - ~ indicates communication problems verbally in a number of ways
 - ~ uses appropriately a number of short one-sentence commands and requests
 - ~ responds to simple questions with required information
 - ~ spells words related to personal identification and information
 - ~ uses basic time reference
 - ~ listener can follow the information

Appendix G: *LINC Classroom Activities* (2009) pp. 121-123

CANADIAN CULTURE



Activity: When Is Your Birthday?

Listen, and write about your classmates' birthdays.

Example: Ahmed's 's birthday is on February 9.

1. _____'s birthday is on _____.
2. _____'s birthday is on _____.
3. _____'s birthday is on _____.
4. _____'s birthday is on _____.
5. _____'s birthday is on _____.
6. _____'s birthday is on _____.
7. _____'s birthday is on _____.
8. _____'s birthday is on _____.
9. _____'s birthday is on _____.
10. _____'s birthday is on _____.
11. _____'s birthday is on _____.
12. _____'s birthday is on _____.
13. _____'s birthday is on _____.
14. _____'s birthday is on _____.



Activity:

Asking For Help

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Learners match citizens' questions to police officers' responses in a reading activity. A vocabulary exercise follows.

Timing: 30 minutes

WARM-UP

- On the blackboard, write the word *problem* and two examples of problems, for example, noisy neighbours or cold weather. Ask volunteers to name a problem they have. List the problems as they are mentioned.
- With the class, subdivide the list into "Problems For The Police" and "Other Problems". For example, vandalism or a dangerous dog would be listed under "Problems For The Police", whereas a child failing in math or a father with diabetes would be listed under "Other Problems".
- Tell the class that they are going to read about four people who asked police officers for help. They must match the problems with police officers' answers.

ACTIVITY

- Distribute Exercise 1. Read the 4 questions on the left with the class, clarifying vocabulary as necessary. Discuss each problem. Have learners had similar problems in their countries of origin, or in Canada? Did they call the police?
- Then, read through the police officers' answers in the right hand column. In pairs, learners match the requests with the answers by drawing lines. Discuss the answers and the 4 situations in general (See Follow-up below).
- Hand out Exercise 2. Read the example sentences aloud, clarifying vocabulary and pronunciation. Learners then complete the cloze sentences.
- Take up the answers.

FOLLOW-UP

- Use Exercise 1 as a starting point to review expressions used to get attention, such as "Excuse me", "Can you help me?" and so on.
- Focus attention on the police officer's response: "That's too bad." Explain how this expression is commonly used to express sympathy. Each class member who shared a problem during the warm-up repeats it, while another classmate practices saying "That's too bad."
- Further discussion points:
 - ~ Parking regulations in your community, parking meters, parking tickets/fines etc.
 - ~ Some Ontario communities have anti-noise bylaws, and, in fact, noisy neighbours should be reported to city hall rather than to the police.
 - ~ People who call 9-1-1 rather than the local Hydro/power company during a power outage present a problem by blocking the phone lines for real emergency calls. (Option: provide the telephone number of your local hydro authority and fill it in on Exercise 1 before making photocopies.)

Appendix H: LINC Classroom Activities (2009) pp. 162-164

CANADIAN LAW

Activity:
Asking For Help

INSTRUCTOR NOTES CONTINUED

ANSWER KEY • Exercise 2: 1. noisy, quiet 2. stolen 3. park 4. report 5. electricity

FURTHER REFERENCE • See LINC Curriculum Guidelines, pp. 276-281.

VOCABULARY • electricity; hydro electricity company; lights; fridge; stove; bicycle (bike); stolen; gone; report; quiet; headache; passport

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CANADIAN LAW

Activity:
Asking For Help

Exercise 1

On the left are four stories. People are asking the police for help. On the right are four answers. Match the answers to the questions. Then, practice reading the conversations with a partner.

Questions for the police	Answers from the police
1. Anita is driving her car. She sees a police officer on the street. "Excuse me. Can I park here?"	"You need to call the hydro electricity company. They fix electricity problems. Their phone number is _____."
2. Ling calls the police station. "We have a problem. Our neighbours have noisy parties every night. Our baby can't sleep."	"No, you can't. There's no parking between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. You can park over there, across the street."
3. Beth calls the police station. "We have no electricity in our house. The lights are off. The fridge and stove don't work."	"That's too bad. Stolen bicycles are a big problem in this city. Come to the police station with me. We will write a report."
4. Abdullah talks to a police officer on the street. "Can you help me? My bike was stolen. I locked it up here this morning. Now it's gone."	"Talk to your neighbours first. Tell them about your baby. Ask them to be quiet at night. If they aren't quiet, call us again."

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Level 1 R/W