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LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED TEACHER CANDIDATES

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This paper reports on findings of a qualitative study that explored the experiences, needs and challenges of internationally educated teacher candidates (IETCs) in a large metropolitan university in Canada. Interviews were conducted with IETCs as well as the teacher educator working with them. Findings revealed that IETCs required additional support in developing their oral and written communication skills and cultural knowledge for teaching in Canadian classrooms. The pedagogical implications of these findings for IETCs, for teacher educators and educational institutions are discussed.

The population of Canada has become increasingly diverse, particularly in its urban areas, as approximately a quarter million immigrants settle in this country annually. In order to fully address the country's economic and labour market needs, the long term objective of the federal government is to further increase immigration levels by 110,000 places every year by 2025 (Graham, 2008). This increase would result in a total of 360,000 new migrants entering the country every year. As a result of this immigration policy, a diverse demographic population is a fundamental characteristic of Canada. In some public schools in urban centres in Ontario up to 80 percent of the students are English Language Learners (ELLs).¹ Many stakeholders in

¹ The Ontario Ministry of Education defines ELLs as students whose first language is a language other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from the variety used in Ontario schools. Thus, ELLs may be Canadian born or recently arrived from other countries. Canadian-born ELLs are raised in families or communities in which languages other than English are spoken. (e.g., aboriginal students or children born in immigrant communities) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007)

education have expressed the need for a teaching force that reflects the diverse student body (Hulsebosch & Koerner, 1993; Thiessen, Bascia & Goodson, 1996; Solomon, 1997; Fenwick, 2001; Dei, 2002; Kauchak & Burbank, 2003). However, there are several factors that impact the integration of such teachers into the public education system. On the one hand, the preparation of teachers who are from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and, in most cases, are new to the Canadian education system, has presented a challenge in creating a future labour pool. This paper provides an overview of such linguistic and cultural challenges and experiences of internationally educated teacher candidates (IETCs).² On the other hand, these teachers face multiple obstacles when attempting to find a full time teaching position in Ontario. According to a survey titled *Transition to Teaching* conducted by Ontario College of Teachers (2004), internationally educated teachers (IETs)³ are disproportionately overrepresented in the occasional/supply teaching force (48%) in Ontario compared to new graduates (18%), teachers educated in other provinces (23%) and teachers educated at border colleges in the United States who are licensed to teach in Ontario (24%). Apparently, systemic and institutional discrimination against teachers from a “different” background plays a major role in allowing IETs to secure a full time teaching position. The situation has only gotten worse in recent years with no teacher shortage, a surplus of recent teacher education graduates, and insufficient teaching positions.

This paper reports on research exploring the linguistic and cultural adaptation of five IETCs within a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program at a metropolitan, research intensive institution in Ontario. This paper draws on literature that pertains to Nonnative English Speaking

²I use the term internationally educated teacher candidate in this paper to refer to a teacher candidate who has attended school or lived and/or worked outside Canada for an extended period of time.

³ Ontario College of Teachers which is the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario uses the term internationally educated teachers (IETs) to refer to teachers who have completed their teacher education outside Canada.

Teachers (NNESTs)⁴ and makes inferences that pertain to IETCs. Research that has examined issues pertaining to teachers who do not speak English as a first language has predominantly focused on these teachers in foreign language contexts and examined issues that pertain to their English language instruction and used the term NNEST (e.g., Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Braine, 1999; 2004; Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Mahboob, 2003). There is scarcity of research in English medium contexts focusing on issues that pertain to such teachers in mainstream kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) classrooms. This study utilizes a broad qualitative methodology approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Johnson, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).⁵ Interviews were conducted over a period of six months with IETCs and a teacher educator (TE) working with them. Classroom observations and a background profile questionnaire were other sources of data. The pseudonyms used for the IETCs (selected by the participants) are Jenny, Dina, Young, Yanson and Paulette and the teacher educator (TE) is referred to as Lisa. The IETCs had resided less than five years in Canada at the time of the study. Major areas of challenge in the program identified for these candidates centred around two major themes: 1) language: including oral and written communication skills, unfamiliarity and discomfort with reflective writing assignments, accent and pronunciation as well as occupation-specific linguistic knowledge, and 2) cultural knowledge, including popular culture, unfamiliarity with learner centered methodology, and the Ontario educational system. These issues as well as voices of IETCs and TEs have been further elaborated on below. I examine the pedagogical implications of this study for IETCs, for teacher educators and educational institutions in the final section.

⁴ I have acknowledged problems associated with the term NNEST in Faez (2007) and provided a reconceptualization of the term.

⁵This study is part of a larger study I conducted for my doctoral research. I have therefore used excerpts from my dissertation in this paper.

Language

In order to function effectively in various university settings and classroom contexts, IETCs need very high levels of English proficiency. For presenting and processing ideas in discussions, they require strong speaking and listening skills. In order to comprehend academic texts and communicate ideas in assignments and written work, IETCs need advanced reading and writing skills. Language proficiency is often a major challenge for these teachers (Mawhinney & Xu, 1997; Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997). Previous research has highlighted that IETCs' ability to speak Standard English and their accents function as barriers in gaining entry to the teaching profession in the host country (Phillion, 2003; Mawhinney and Xu 1997). Some studies have identified pronunciation (Tang, 1997), writing, and vocabulary (including idiomatic and colloquial expressions and slang) as areas of perceived difficulty (Kamhi-Stein, Lee and Lee, 1999; Liu, 1999; Samimy and Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Other studies suggest that IETCs are less likely to use colloquial language and are less confident in their skills (e.g., Reves and Medgyes, 1994). The central issue is whether the language proficiency of IETCs impacts their instructional ability. While two studies (Kamhi-Stein et al., 1999; Samimy and Brutt-Griffler, 1999) have revealed that the language proficiency of these teachers does not influence their instructional practices in the classroom, Barratt and Kontra (2000) suggest that IETCs' (level of) English proficiency constraints them from implementing desirable teaching approaches in the classroom.

In my survey of IETCs and teacher educators, IETCs highlighted the challenges of academic reading and writing assignments. These candidates reported having difficulty and requiring more time to complete assigned reading and writing tasks for various courses. Challenging reading tasks for IETCs include reading course material, reading student submissions, reading feedback from teacher educators and associate teachers and, more

importantly, reading curriculum, school and ministry documents. Challenging writing tasks for IETCs include writing a lesson plan, writing on the blackboard, writing comments in reports for parents, writing assignments and assessment tools for students in the practicum, and providing written feedback for students.

Jenny, an IETC who had spent about five years in Canada, indicated that her greatest challenge in the program was her inadequate level of English proficiency. She did not find the content of the teacher education program complex or insurmountable. Her frustration stemmed from the fact that she was not able to communicate her ideas effectively, whether it was in group discussions, in whole class contributions, in writing assignments or in the classroom:

I think my biggest challenge is English because with the other educations I have, I don't think, like to understand the subject is complicated or challenging, I feel ..., it's all my language skills, like you try to communicate your ideas, you know, you try to have a discussion with other people but you can't really put it in a clear way, you know, to try to pass your ideas so that's kind of like you feel so frustrated.⁶

Young, who was preparing to become a math teacher, echoed Jenny's concern. Language proficiency was also his main challenge in the program. He discussed the consequences of what he viewed as his inadequate level of English proficiency. He explained that not only did it take him much longer to complete his reading and writing assignments compared to individuals who spoke English as their first language, but also that he did not fully grasp the meaning of some of the readings he had to complete for the courses he was taking in the Bachelor of Education program. He felt that he needed to improve his English ability:

I think my English in writing or speaking still give me some difficulties ... compared to other students whose native language is English. And I found myself have to spend more time in my assignment preparing presentations. And I think I need more time to improve myself. It's the material, the material because there are too much for me to finish the reading and I have to go through them and sometimes I don't get a meaning from them.

⁶ All quotes are verbatim; thus they may include errors.

Paulette had similar concerns. She believed that her peers ‘jumped’ into the discussion and she found it frustrating when she could not follow the discussion. Despite reading the articles carefully in advance, she did not fully grasp the main idea in some of the readings. She also expressed frustration at not being able to articulate her thoughts immediately after a question was posed by the instructor. Her language restrictions did not allow her to organize her ideas and express them at the same speed as her peers. She was thus unable to participate fully in class as a result of her need for more time. She thought that the instructor could perhaps give everybody some time to think before they were granted permission to talk. Such a strategy would assist all learners, especially IETs. By doing so, teacher candidates like Paulette would also be able to participate:

I found that when there are lots of native speakers, they speak. Some of them, they speak really fast. And sometimes, I do notice that some people, like for me, when someone just give a question, I would just think about, you know, think about that for ten seconds before I am going to speak. Think about how I am going to organize my ideas. But I do notice that a lot of Canadians, I mean when they say something, it’s the time when they organize their ideas. And sometimes I feel very frustrated. Like I mean why can’t you just give everyone five seconds to think before we are going to share the ideas.

Yanson, whose teaching subject was science, complained that the language in the readings was far beyond his level of English comprehension. He also shared frustrations that arose during his practice teaching session that stemmed from searching for the right word to express his ideas precisely. His trepidation in the presence of the students often occurred in the form of sweating and shaking. His accent and mispronunciation of certain words resulted in his feeling humiliated in class. He explained how harrowing his experience was by indicating that he lost twelve pounds after the first practicum.

As a result of these linguistic challenges, IETCs often found writing assignments and particularly journals and reflective assignments challenging. Paulette explained how the research

part of an assignment for one of her courses was manageable, but that she was uncomfortable writing the case study and posting it in the class conference where all her colleagues would have access to it. She felt that it was extremely important for a teacher to be accurate in his/her language use. She was therefore afraid to make 'silly' grammatical mistakes and consequently lose face as a teacher in the eyes of her peers. She explained how she did not have a support system to ask someone to review her work before she posted it:

Like I don't have any trouble doing the research but just writing. Because we need to write up a case study and then post it so that everyone can read it again. The language part, I was so afraid that I make some silly grammar mistake because everyone can see it and I would just embarrass myself.

She was also concerned about the material that she prepared for her students. Since she was a secondary teacher, the level of language and especially vocabulary that she needed to use in her handouts was relatively advanced. She was concerned about making errors in such writing tasks.

The majority of IETCs also found sharing their personal feelings uncomfortable and therefore writing journal entries were challenging for them. Dina stated that since she had never used language to express her feelings and that she had never articulated her impressions, doing so in English was particularly challenging.

Speaking was also an area of difficulty for IETCs and thus oral presentations were not their favorite assignments either. Paulette was more concerned about her colleagues' perceptions of her inaccurate use of language and accent rather than the grade that she received from the instructor:

I found the presentations challenging, even to present something to my professor I found it's OK but when I need to present something to the whole class and because you have so many colleagues right, well because English is not my first language, I am very aware of my accent and my grammar, like when I present something will I do, I make many grammatical mistakes, will the people make fun of me, like I always think about that and that really really bothers me and that's why I found that it is really challenging, when I need to present something.

Young expressed how presentations were ‘tough’ for him, because he was an ‘ESL speaker’. The fact that he had to speak in front of a lot of people made it even more challenging. Jenny shared her traumatic experience during one of the practicum sessions. She read a story to her Grade 6 students. Her accent and mispronunciation of the word ‘thought’ created confusion for the students. In fact, I was confused during the interview when she was telling me the story. I did not quite understand what she was trying to say and I could not figure out the expression she was using. I had to interrupt her for clarification. She explained that it was frustrating for her because, as a teacher, she was a role model and should be able to say words ‘properly’.

Lisa, the teacher educator, was an experienced teacher educator whose expertise was preparing teachers for multilingual and multicultural classrooms. She understood the potential challenges that IETCs would face compared to the teacher candidates (TCs) who were educated in Canada. Similar to challenges stated by IETCs, she identified oral presentations and personal reflections as areas of challenge for these participants compared to their counterparts who were educated in Canada:

I think many of the nonnative English speakers find doing oral presentations and personal reflections more difficult. It takes them more time to get comfortable with writing personal responses to articles or presentations and standing in front of a group and doing a presentation. I think many of them find it more difficult than students who were educated here.

Lisa also made a distinction between real challenges of IETCs and their perceived challenges. Real language challenges, as she explained, were due to problems with the inaccurate use of grammar and vocabulary. Perceived language challenges were due to issues related to accent and pronunciation. She pointed out that teachers with accents different from the local accent might be perceived as having language problems. According to Lisa, IETCs face major challenges, sometimes linguistic, sometimes linguistic prejudice, on the part of associate teachers

or people interviewing them, who hear an accent and assume there is a linguistic problem. Lisa, however, indicated that there were also individuals in the program who did not have the required level of proficiency to be a teacher. A number of IETCs themselves (for example Jenny, Young and Yanson) attested that they believed their level of language proficiency impacted their instructional ability in the secondary classroom. Therefore, language proficiency remains a major challenge and concern for some IETCs and improving their level of language ability should be the top priority for these teachers.

Culture and the Canadian Educational System

IETCs also expressed challenges due to their cultural knowledge and lack of familiarity with the educational system in Ontario, teacher and student roles and responsibilities, pop culture, and classroom management. Paulette expressed confusion about the cultural norms in Canada and the nature of small talk among Canadians. She stated that she did not understand why Canadians were “superficial” and did not communicate the truth in social encounters.

Here, I find that people always say something very nice. For example, they will say, “Oh, how are you?” Everything is just so positive. But in Hong Kong we will say, “How are you?” But if we don’t have a good day, we will say it. But here, if you say something bad, it just seems that Canadians, they say “Oh, that’s OK.” That’s why I find that it is really different. At the beginning, it was kind of like weird. Because why you guys are so superficial? I mean, if you don’t have a good day, just say it, right? Just be honest. But I guess, it’s just the culture that is very different.

In my observation, due to a lack of in-depth knowledge of the Canadian culture, Paulette did not fully appreciate the optimistic nature of the Canadian culture. Dina and Young, on the other hand, were concerned about their lack of knowledge of culture and pop culture in the classroom. They believed they might not be able to relate to the students effectively due to the gaps in their cultural knowledge.

Dina indicated that she was not familiar with the academic context and teaching styles in Ontario. She felt most comfortable working in a teacher-fronted classroom with students who fully respected the teacher's authority:

Coming from a very academic environment, from back home, I was used to the Socratic teaching; teacher in front of the class lecturing. When I came to [this institution] and saw tables clustered in groups, I found it very hard. I am used to the teacher at the front and me as a student taking notes.

Yanson detested group work, and the fact that the educational system in Ontario is centred around cooperative learning added to his frustration. He referred to group work as his most negative experience in the program. He explained how, in one of the group presentations, his three group members, who were also from different parts of the world, did not work collaboratively. Their group presentation resulted in “four little presentations with four different ideas”. He seemed to associate the issue with group work rather than the inappropriate manner in which the activity was facilitated. In contrast, Young did not have a negative attitude towards cooperative learning techniques, but found implementing the techniques challenging. He believed that he had to restructure his teaching techniques to suit the demands of a Canadian classroom. He compared the educational system in his country of origin to Canada, and was surprised that in Canada the teacher was more responsible for students' learning. In his country, classes were teacher-centred and the teacher was only responsible for transmitting knowledge, whereas in Canada, the teacher had to make the material interesting and learnable.

Cooperative learning practices were identified as a new area for almost all IETCs. However, the way they responded to these practices was different. Yanson simply did not believe that students learn cooperatively. Paulette indicated that cooperative learning was new to her but unlike other IETCs she found it “amazing”. The age of the TCs was a significant factor in

determining participants' attitude towards this practice. The younger participants expressed a more favourable attitude towards this teaching technique.

Critical thinking and analytical skills were also perceived to be difficult for some IETCs. Due to their previous educational experiences and the societal power structures in their countries of origin, some candidates were not used to "criticizing" or commenting on the scholarly work of others. Paulette expressed how analytical skills were not nourished in the society in which she grew up:

I am not really used to criticize what's happening. So that's why I found that I guess, I just don't have this type of analytical skill. Like I have that kind of training in science but just not in societal issues, that kind of thing.

IETCs were also not familiar with the Ontario educational system. Dina found that, since she was not brought up in Canada, she lacked specific knowledge about the school system, the curriculum, the administration as well as the evaluation practices. For Dina, her practicum was her first experience in a Canadian high school. She compared herself to individuals who were raised in Canada, and expressed the concern that she faced additional challenges in understanding how the system works:

I think it was a challenge. Because a lot of people expected me to know certain things that other people coming from a Canadian system of education would know. And I think it was harder. Because I had to absorb more than others where other classmates knew things because they were in a Canadian high school, whereas I entered a Canadian high school the first time when I went on my first practicum.

Young echoed the same concerns, and expressed that he did not have a solid grasp of the secondary curriculum even after he completed the course requirements. Lisa confirmed that some IETCs needed an orientation to Canadian classrooms. In her observation, TCs who were educated in Canada were advantaged in the sense that they could understand the context of schooling much better. Many of them, especially the younger ones, had been exposed to the

same teaching practices. A point that Lisa highlighted was that a lot of teacher expectations are subtle and understood, but never clearly articulated:

Well, most of the native English speakers have had experience in Ontario schools. So they understand the context of schooling much better. They understand the cultural orientation of schooling. They understand the individualistic, the emphasis on individual fulfillment and performance which is so prevalent in North American society and they take that as a given. They often experienced many of the same kinds of activities in class that are still being used with students today, specially the younger ones. And so people like fairly young ones, ... So they do understand the kinds of things that are expected in school; a lot of which is never really articulated very clearly, it's just sort of understood.

Lisa believed that IETCs had to make certain adjustments in order to become successful teachers in Canadian schools. She compared the more traditional teaching contexts that most TCs were familiar with to the teaching practices promoted for Ontario classrooms. She suggested that in certain cultures, teachers gain respect and authority by virtue of their role, but in the Canadian context teachers need to assert their respect by being more active in the classroom and responding to students' needs effectively. Learning the culture of the classroom and directing students in culturally appropriate methods are paramount to being a successful teacher in K-12 classrooms in Ontario.

Discussion

This study confirms previous research examining the needs and challenges of IETCs (e.g., Gambhir, 2004; Gagné and Inbar, 2006). The results of this work suggest that IETCs require additional support in developing their oral and written communication skills, cultural knowledge and self-confidence. As the participant cases revealed, familiarity with the new educational system, writing journal assignments and reflective pieces, conducting oral presentations in teacher education seminars, as well as establishing appropriate classroom management practices

and methodologies in student-centred classrooms, were among the areas of challenge for these candidates. However, it is important to realize that there is a wide variation of expertise, English proficiency and cultural knowledge among IETCs, and that there are multiple, interrelated and complex issues behind their experiences. Similar to Canadian born teachers who show variability among their skills, some immigrant teachers who self-identify as IETCs may be linguistically and culturally more competent than local Canadian born teachers. This variation poses challenges in teacher education programs in trying to find the best program to support these teacher candidates. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach is likely to fall short in meeting the complex demands of these TCs and the teacher education program at large. Given the complexity and variability of the findings, it is important to view these challenges contextually and from multiple perspectives, i.e., the perspectives of teacher candidates themselves as well as teacher educators, students and employers working with them.

Pedagogical Implications for IETCs

IETCs need to realize that as teachers, their level of language proficiency plays a significant role in the classroom. They need to be aware that they are the language models in the classroom. All teachers need to understand the importance of exposing students to correct forms of language both in their oral production and written practices. For teachers who speak English as a first language, this may mean enhancing their professional language use by being mindful of inappropriate idiomatic expressions and learning to speak in a comprehensible manner for all students, especially English language learners. In addition to the areas specified, IETCs may need to enhance their general proficiency level as well as teaching-specific language skills (e.g., the language used for completing functions in the classroom such as opening a discussion or

agreeing and disagreeing with students). Inadequate levels of language proficiency may result in conveying misconceptions in the classroom, which is a serious consideration. In my observation of student teaching, an IETC's inadequate level of language proficiency created confusion for students attempting to follow instructions on how to complete an activity, which in turn resulted in both teacher and student frustration.

In spite of the significance of language proficiency, teacher candidates need to recognize that developing strong language skills is a long and complex process, one that involves strong commitment, high motivation and a positive attitude. Teacher candidates could familiarize themselves with the strategic use of language in the classroom which includes, but is not limited to, using shorter sentences in giving instructions, frequently rephrasing and paraphrasing explanations, and learning teaching-specific language expressions. Using dictionaries, exposing oneself to oral and written forms of language by watching TV and reading books and newspaper, and interacting with English speaking friends and colleagues are also common strategies that IETCs could consider to improve their proficiency.

Pedagogical Implications for Teacher Educators

Teacher educators need to realize that providing even a small amount of support to teacher candidates can have a huge impact on their experiences. Teacher educators should recognize that some TCs, especially IETCs, might struggle with issues related to their language proficiency. Instructors can modify practices within their own classrooms to better support IETCs in the program. In fact, by doing so, teacher educators would be modeling effective ESL pedagogy and inclusive teaching practices. Teacher educators need to explore new ways of teaching and designing instruction so that different groups of learners can thrive in their

classroom. This means embracing diversity and committing to educational equity by dealing with the issues flexibly and creatively. Given the increasing diversity in teacher education programs, teacher educators should not assume that they will be dealing with monolingual and homogeneous groups of TCs as they plan their courses. It is crucial to value the unique perspectives, knowledge and experiences that diverse TCs bring to the program.

Teacher educators should incorporate the following sorts of strategies to better support the success of all TCs in their classrooms, and make the content of class discussions more accessible and comprehensible. These strategies include but are not limited to:

- providing background or cultural information on topics of discussion,
- ensuring that local and idiomatic expressions and acronyms are known to all TCs,
- summarizing and debriefing classroom discussions from time to time,
- clarifying the main points of classroom discussions and connecting them to the broader picture at hand,
- providing time for students to think before they respond and,
- providing IETCs one on one mentorship

Teacher educators should use their “emancipatory authority” (Giroux, 1988, cited in Norton, 2000) by taking an active role in legitimizing the participation of all TCs, especially those who struggle to participate or tend to be marginalized in classroom discussions (Leki, 2001). One general approach is to treat IETCs as resources with valuable insights into cross-cultural understanding and language learning. A more practical approach to promoting equity in classroom discussions is by intervening in turn-taking practices to ensure that all TCs have the opportunity to participate.

Teacher educators need to realize the significance of TCs’ emotions in their success in the program. Emotions are central to the cognitive development of individuals (Vygotsky, 1987; Verity, 2000; Forgas, 2001). Therefore, it is important for teacher educators to empower IETCs in teacher education programs and create classroom environments that are conducive to learning.

This practice is crucial to IETCs' success when they are perceived as less credible in the profession (Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Norton, 2000). Strategies to empower TCs include:

- asking for their input and referring to their linguistic expertise,
- recognizing their backgrounds, past experiences and roots, and
- communicating a positive attitude towards individuals who speak more than one language.

In addition, it is important for teacher educators to be willing to spend time with IETCs outside of regular class time. Although teacher candidates acknowledged the time limitations of their instructors, they believed that one-on-one interaction allowed them to discuss their concerns and receive appropriate advice and support.

Implications for Educational Institutions

Findings of this study revealed that IETCs required additional support in developing their oral and written communication skills and cultural knowledge. A lack of familiarity with the new education system, little or no experience writing journal assignments and reflective pieces or conducting oral presentations in teacher education seminars, as well as little or no experience with Canadian classroom management practices and teaching strategies suitable for student-centred classrooms were identified as areas of challenge for IETCs.

While educational institutions need to modify admissions processes in order to ensure greater diversity in the teacher candidate population, there is also a need for a better screening system for TCs. The admissions process at most institutions is unable to adequately capture the proficiency of candidates within the parameters of the program and the guidelines in place. For example, in one such research intensive institution in Ontario, an applicant who has only studied for three years in an English-medium university is exempt from providing additional proof of English proficiency. This minimum requirement does not guarantee acceptable levels of

proficiency to perform certain teaching-related tasks and activities in Ontario classrooms. Lower than acceptable levels of English language proficiency can make the journey of becoming a teacher overwhelming and frustrating for some TCs. Language learning is a life-long endeavor and given the intensive and demanding B.Ed. program in most institutions, TCs generally do not have the time to improve their language skills sufficiently during a one-year program. A low level of English proficiency may result in TCs' inability to enter the teaching profession and therefore impact their lives in profound ways.

A strong institutional commitment to initiatives that further support IETCs is required in teacher preparation programs. Teacher education programs could design courses to address the needs of IETCs. Courses can help IETCs become familiar with the professional conventions prevalent in Canadian teaching contexts while developing oral, written and cross-cultural communication skills. Additional extra-curricular support programs such as workshops, informal discussion groups, and one-on-one counseling services would also benefit IETCs and create a 'safe haven' for them. Workshops that address their specific needs and introduce strategies and resources to them as well as discussion groups where they could meet and discuss their needs and challenges with other IETCs in the program could positively impact their experiences. A center that provides one-on-one opportunities to IETCs to improve language proficiency, knowledge of culture and teacher specific communication skills would benefit IETCs in teacher preparation programs. If teacher education programs are committed to diversifying the teaching force, they also need to be committed to addressing the challenges that may arise by the increasing diversity.

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