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Is Anyone Listening? – Experiences of Junior-Level English Language Learners in Southwestern Ontario

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**Is Anyone Listening? – Experiences of Junior-Level
English Language Learners in Southwestern Ontario**

By

Nevin MacLeod

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Faculty of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Education

at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2016

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English Language Learners in Southwestern Ontario**

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

With an increasing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) entering the Ontario school system, the Ontario Ministry of Education has responded through the development of multiple documents containing policies and procedures to accommodate these students. However, research relating to the perspectives of the elementary ELLs who are receiving these accommodations has been sparse. This qualitative-based transcendental phenomenological research study sheds light on the perspectives of nine junior-level (Grades 4-6) ELLs enrolled in both a mainstream classroom and an English as an Additional Language (EAL) program for at least one year at three respective public schools. With having captured the essence of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario first hand, this research both informs and assists educators in understanding how academic and psychosocial experiences of ELLs could be contributing factors in the delay of academic proficiency in core subject areas and/or in acquiring the requisite level of English language competency.

Keywords: English Language Learner (ELL), English as an Additional Language (EAL), elementary school, English as a Second Language (ESL), student perspective, second language learners, learning experience, academic proficiency, academic success, program effectiveness

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
CLT	Communicative Language Theory
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELD	English Language Development
ELL	English Language Learner
ELLs	English Language Learner(s)
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESL	English as Second Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
L3	Third Language
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
SLACS	Second Language Acquisition in Culture and Society

Chapter 1

Introduction

According to the most recent Statistics Canada Report (2011), 20.6% of the total Canadian population was born outside Canada with over one million having immigrated between 2006 and 2011 alone. Of those new immigrants, 19.2% were children aged fourteen and younger, and 14.5% were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. In considering this growing trend, as well as the significant number of Canadians born whose primary language is not English, it is no surprise that over 25% of Ontario school-age children have been identified as English Language Learners (hereafter referred to as ELL (singular) or ELLs (plural) (OME, 2013b). Furthermore, it has since been ascertained that at least 72% of Ontario English elementary schools and 55% of Ontario English high schools have an ELL population (People for Education, 2013).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2011) defines ELLs as,

[...] students whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario's schools, and who may require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English. These students may be Canadian born or recently arrived from other countries. They come from diverse backgrounds and school experiences, and have a wide variety of strengths and needs. (p. 31)

These students are found in either English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) programs, with the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007a) describing the first program serving the purpose of providing ELLs with the opportunity to “develop age-appropriate first-language literacy skills” and the latter providing more

intensive support for ELLs who have had limited education in their country of origin and therefore, “have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language” (p. 22). Statistics Canada (2011) indicated that 17.5% of Canada’s population reported at least two languages being spoken at home, showing an increase from 14.2% in 2006. With this in mind, I have decided to refer to English as a Second Language (ESL) programming as English as an Additional Language (EAL) programming hereafter as the term EAL appears to be a better descriptor of students currently engaged in English language instruction in Ontario Schools.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has developed multiple policies, procedures, and adaptations to the elementary and secondary school curriculum for ELLs, and published the aforementioned in Ministry documents. To provide a context as to which topic(s) are covered and/or what are some features found in these documents, a brief description of Ministry documents over the past eleven years featuring ELLs have been described below.

Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom (2005) provides readers with practical ways to encourage and maintain an inclusive and supportive learning environment in each Ontario classroom; provides “tips for the classroom” (p. 1) for teachers to structure their classrooms, lessons/assessment, and approaches to assist ELLs during their learning process; and lastly, inform the reader of the various academic, cultural and psychosocial circumstances faced ELLs in Ontario.

English Language Learners / ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2007) is separated into two parts. The first part addresses the programs and policies in

place for ELLs and how the aforementioned will be carried out through the commitment of the Ontario Ministry of Education. The second part delves into the Ministry's policies and procedures regarding the allocation of resources and implementation of programming for ELLs from Kindergarten to Grade 12; when an ELL will continue and/or discontinue enrolment in the English language programming offered by the government; and what qualifications and/or professional development would be suitable for teachers to teach English to ELLs.

Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A practical guide for Ontario educators (2007) provides educators with background information on how the kindergarten teacher and his or her school's community can assist with the process of integrating the ELL kindergartner and his or her family into the Ontario context. The document also addresses the process of working with ELLs at the kindergarten-level, provides teachers with guidance for instructing ELLs, and highlights different programs and services available for the ELL and his or her family.

The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12: English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development (2007) is a document which encompasses the same topics discussed in *Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A practical guide for Ontario educators* (2007) and *Supporting English Language Learners: a practical guide for Ontario Educators Grades 1-8* (2008) (described below); however, this document applies to ELLs in the secondary school setting.

Supporting English Language Learners: a practical guide for Ontario Educators Grades 1-8 (2008) is separated into three sections which provides educators with guidance relating to success outcomes; the process and steps of integrating ELLs into the

Ontario public educational system; and lastly, how to adapt the Ontario curriculum to create lessons for ELLs. Also included in this document are samples of units and lessons as well as a glossary and list of helpful resources.

Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling (2008) addresses the reality of those ELLs coming to Canada who may not have formal schooling experience; what programming and services are available in Ontario to assist ELLs with transitioning into the Ontario educational context; and how to teach and assess these ELLs with limited prior education. Throughout the document there are scenarios an educator may come across while teaching ELLs with limited prior schooling and what could be done in these situations.

STEP- Steps to English Proficiency: A Guide for Users (2012) is a document developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education which is described as “one of a number of resources written to assist teachers in supporting a growing demographic of English language learners in Ontario schools” (p. 3). This resource provides educators and readers alike with resources, strategies and exemplars relating to the teaching, ongoing assessment and evaluation of ELLs and also provides a briefing of information which is covered in more depth in the following Ministry documents to be described.

English Language Learners were also mentioned in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s documents that speak to the Ministry’s successes and how to improve. Each of these respective documents are described below.

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario's Schools, First Edition Covering Grades 1 to 12 (2010) informs educators of the revised policies and practices involving assessment, evaluation and tracking of growth or lack thereof in

student achievement and what should be done in each circumstance. The document also provides strategies to modify and accommodate different learners (i.e. ELLs) together with templates of various documents that Ontario educators would complete for each student.

Ontario Schools: Policy and Program Requirements, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2011) was developed with the intention that the Ontario Ministry of Education could provide educators, administration and other readers with a single document to refer to which has consolidated numerous other documents containing policies and programming that impact students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. With respect to ELLs, this document summarizes policies and procedures found in the documents mentioned above.

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2014) is a document created by the Ontario Ministry of Education which declares that the Ministry is committed to providing both equitable and inclusive education for students in Ontario classrooms. The document reminds readers that the Ministry has renewed goals which are built on three priorities; namely, “increasing student achievement, closing gaps in student achievement, and increasing public confidence in publicly funded education” (p. 5). It also provides school boards with guidelines to “develop, implement, and monitor equity and inclusive education policies that support student achievement and well-being” (p. 8).

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014) is a Ministry document that highlights the position of Ontario public schools and what successes have taken place in Ontario public school classrooms and school communities. The document also provides the reader with a revised vision and a set of goals for the

educational system in Ontario in promoting and maintaining current student demographics (i.e. ELLs) and how these goals may be achieved.

However, despite the multiple policies, procedures, and adaptations to the elementary and secondary school curriculum, as well as in-school services to assist ELLs with both academics and with the English language learning process in a specialized EAL program and/or part of an inclusive classroom that are highlighted in the aforementioned documents, many of these students in Ontario, especially Canadian-born ELLs including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, can lag by at least five years in developing English language competency and resultantly struggle in meeting the rigorous learning objectives of core subject areas (Jang, Dunlop, Wagner, Kim, & Gu, 2013; Jang, Cummins, Wagner, Stille, & Dunlop, 2015).

One means of measuring and comparing student success in Ontario is through province wide testing. In an analysis of the 2006 results from the province wide EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) test, Jang et al. (2013) reported that only 34% of the Grade 6 multilingual ELLs who had been in Canada for less than a year, scored at Level 3 (met provincial standards) and 4 (exceeded provincial standards), as compared to 51% of English monolingual peers who had been in Canada for the same amount of time. With one to two years of residence, 45% of multilingual ELLs scored at Levels 3 and 4 while 61% of English monolingual speakers scored at Levels 3 and 4. The gap did however begin to narrow with two to three years and again with three to five years of residence with comparisons between the groups of 55% to 64% and 57% to 66% respectively, and with 72% success rate for both groups with five years or more of residency. Lastly, as an interesting point of comparison, the respective success rate for

achieving levels 3 and 4 for those ELLs and monolingual English speakers who were born in Canada was 60% for multilingual ELLs and 66% for English monolingual speakers. This speaks not only to the lag but also to the potential for ELLs with sufficient time in Ontario and suitable programming.

Furthermore, from this review of research literature, there appears to have been a significant amount of inquiry into the area of English language acquisition and documented research seeking the viewpoints of various stakeholders, including administration, teachers and even parents involved in the provision of services; however, there is very little from the ELLs themselves- especially in the elementary years (DelliCarpini, 2008; Milnes & Cheng, 2008; People for Education, 2013; Shoukri, 2010; Stoller, 2008; Zeegers & McKinnon, 2012). In this study, I have explored the lived experiences of the ELLs as they navigate through the program(s) and services(s) in place for them as consumers of the service. In light of this knowledge, it has provided me with a better understanding of the degree to which the current programming and/or the theory supporting such is effective.

Through the triangulation of data from junior-level (Grades 4-6) ELLs in three EAL programs in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools, the compilation of Ontario policy documents and peer-reviewed literature from 2005 to present found on the junior-level ELL perspective, and my analysis of the emerging phenomenon thereof, I argue that the academic and psychosocial experiences of ELLs could be contributing factors in the delay of academic proficiency in core subject areas and/or in acquiring the requisite level of English language competency.

Statement of Purpose

My research goal was to highlight and address the learning experiences of junior-level (Grades 4-6) ELLs currently enrolled in EAL programs in three Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools. It was anticipated that listening to the personal learning experiences of current junior-level ELLs in Ontario would paint a picture as to what a school day in the life of an ELL is like and their thoughts of the EAL programming as implemented in Southwestern Ontario. It was further anticipated that the narratives collected from students who participated in the study will capture the essence or ‘the essential nature’ of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario at publicly funded schools for junior-level ELLs and serve as a starting point in addressing contributing factors leading to the apparent disconnect between the intended successes of current Ministry guidelines/programming and the actual achievement level of junior-level ELLs (van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

It is anticipated that the findings of this research study will assist educators and other stakeholders in the public education system in Ontario in acknowledging the perspectives and actual elementary school experience(s) of Southwestern Ontario junior-level ELLs and bring to their attention accommodations/modifications which could improve the academic (formal learning and testing of subject matter) and psychosocial (interaction of psychological and social aspects) experiences of ELLs through implementation of recommendations and /or future investigation in EAL practices, policies and programming as disclosed.

This research is important and highly relevant to the field of education and to the larger field of social sciences/humanities when considering the continuously changing

demographics of Canada through immigration; the projection that 29 to 32% of people in Canada will have a primary language other than English by the year 2031; and the fact that the province of Ontario has served as the home to more than half of immigrants between 2006 and 2011 and could continue to serve as the destination for more to come (Statistics Canada, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2015). Moreover, in the Southwestern Ontario context, Waddell (2015) noted that Ontario Ministry of Education officials have recognized the need to revisit their schools' approach towards teaching language and literacy based on the most recent province-wide literacy results. Those who did not meet the provincial standard on the literacy test in Grade 10 also did not meet the provincial standard while they were in Grade 6. The Superintendent of Education in Secondary Staffing at the Greater Essex County District School Board recognized factors that could be contributing towards the decreased literacy scores, such as “the diversity of the local population, the number of English as a second-language students, the number of students with special needs and students coming from marginalized backgrounds” (Waddell, 2015).

Given these statistics, projections and current circumstances, and the fact that most ELLs require at least two years to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and five years to catch up to English speaking peers in using language to communicate complex academic concepts, timely research and the resultant recommendations for intervention are of great importance in providing English language learners with equitable opportunity for academic success (Jang et al., 2013; OME, 2008a, 2013b).

Research Question

How does the educational experience of junior-level (Grades 4-6) English Language Learners (ELLs), currently registered in EAL resource support programs in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools, relate to ELL's achievement of short and long term academic success and psychosocial wellbeing?

York, Gibson and Rankin (2015) surveyed twenty peer-reviewed academic journals for the purpose of discovering how *academic success* is defined and measured by academics in the field of education and concluded that the definition and measurement of what is academic success varies; thus, the definition can become quite broad and be easily misused within educational research. As such, York et al. (2015) concluded that a “theoretically grounded” definition of academic success would need to contemplate the following components; namely, “academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of learning objectives, and career success” (p. 9).

The operational definition of academic success for this study relating to junior-level (Grade 4-6) ELLs is as follows: Striving to meet one's academic potential in relation to the requisite skills and competencies of one's personal and vocational learning objectives and aspirations.

Secondly, as for the operational definition of *psychosocial well-being*, the following has been adopted for the purposes of this study: “Psychosocial well-being is considered to be the presence of higher levels of positive, and lower levels of adverse, psychological and social attributes and behaviors” (Hinkley et al., 2014, p. 183).

Bracketing

Through a process called *bracketing*, also referred to as *Epoche* in phenomenological terminology (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994), I will demonstrate my place in this research. According to Creswell (2013), bracketing is when the “investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (p. 80). This step closely resembles that of *reflexivity*, where a researcher can make him or her “conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). This transparency did not only grant me the opportunity to become more aware of myself and allow me to look at the world of the phenomenon with a fresh perspective, but also simultaneously shed a light for the reader(s) of this thesis as to who/what kind of person I am, what prompted me to take on the endeavor of writing this thesis, and lastly, the mindset I have going forward with this research study (Moustakas, 1994).

To begin, I grew up in a middle-class family in a small town outside one of the most diverse cities in all of Canada: Windsor, Ontario (Province of Ontario, 2015). I was actively involved in a number of school sports, where I made many friends with whom I have kept in touch for over twenty years and I had a family network that supported my academic and extra-curricular endeavors. Both of my parents were teachers at one point in their lives and my mother, during my childhood and early adolescence, coordinated and taught English to international students, new Canadians, and Canadian-born students whose primary language was not English at a local community college.

During my early adolescence, I relished the experience of having volunteered as a lab technician and classroom assistant in that environment, which exposed me firsthand

to various teaching practices and English programming at the post-secondary level. In addition to the academics, our family was very fortunate to have been invited to attend many religious and/or cultural events in Windsor that helped me to develop an even greater appreciation as to who these students were outside of the classroom.

Unfortunately, with our family being monolingual, there were many instances where we did not understand exactly what was being said and/or why something was being done at a particular event. These kinds of experiences provided me with tremendous insight and an even deeper respect for these individuals who had given up the security of a familiar language and culture to embark on a new life in a country very different than home. Even though none of my family members are currently involved in teaching English anymore, these memories have stayed with me and I have made the effort to continue to be involved in the greater multicultural community through attending cultural events and other social gatherings.

In tune with my educational roots, I have attained a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in dramatic arts; a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.); an Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma; two Additional Qualification (AQ) courses in Special Education (Part 1) and English as a Second Language (Part 2); an Additional Basic Qualification (ABQ) course in Health & Physical Education (Intermediate); and lastly, I am pursuing a Master of Education (M.Ed.) with a concentration in Second Language Acquisition in Culture and Society (SLACS). My educational training provided me with the chance to learn the theory behind the importance of differentiating my pedagogical practice and assessment techniques (OME, 2008a). One example would be to provide students with the appropriate/optimal amount of *scaffolding* to accomplish challenging or complex tasks.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) defined *scaffolding* as “the adult “controlling” those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence” (p. 90). To explain this concept, Nordlof (2014) provided the example of teaching a child how to ride a bicycle. Typically a child would require an adult to hold the back of the bicycle to control the element of balancing so the child could focus solely on the task of learning how to pedal. Once that task was accomplished, the child could then move on to learning how to both pedal and maintain balance at the same time. Once both elements are accomplished then he or she can then apply this new knowledge/skill to future tasks such as riding a motorbike. In the classroom context, scaffolding pushes students to meet academic goals that are either too demanding or not challenging enough without sacrificing the desire to learn.

I also learned about the importance of establishing an inclusive environment where an eclectic group of students of differing strengths, weaknesses, socio-economic backgrounds, origins, experiences, and so on would be able to learn, live, grow, cooperate, collaborate, and function as a learning community (OME, 2010). The life lessons and experiences of the students within an inclusive environment are transferrable from the classroom into society thus providing for a more tolerant community. I also learned the critical importance for a teacher to value the identities of his or her students and appeal to the interests of the students with student-centered learning so that students and their families can take pride in their identities, integrate rather than assimilate into the society of that school community, and also learn in a context that is relevant and of interest to the students (Coelho, 2007).

To accomplish this end, educators need to listen and learn from their students, a belief of which I have strongly embraced. During my course of studies as a graduate student, I have become acquainted with the works of educational theorists such as, but not limited to, John Dewey (1938/1997) and Paolo Freire (1987). One particular passage that really resonated with me about the importance of a teacher learning about his or her respective students was from *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* by American professor of composition theory and rhetoric at City University of New York, Ira Shor (“Faculty Listing”, n.d.), and his good friend and mentor, Brazilian philosopher and curriculum theorist Paolo Freire (1987):

But first, I must establish an atmosphere where students agree to say, write and do what is authentic to them. To help them say more in the beginning I restrain my own voice in the early going, to give their voices room. [...] What matters most to me in the beginning is how much and how fast I can learn about the students. For me this is an experimental moment. [...] I want to learn with them what their real cognitive and affective levels are, what their authentic language sounds like, what degree of alienation they bring to critical study, what their living conditions are, as groundings for dialogue and inquiry. (pp. 6-7)

As an educator actively engaged in reflective practice, I adhere to this belief as I too want to give a voice to those who are struggling to be heard as I have so much to learn to effectively participate in the design and facilitation of processes by which to meet both the psychosocial and academic needs of ELLs.

In addition to the study of pedagogical literature during my last seven years of post-secondary coursework, I was able to put that newly acquired theory and strategies

into practice when teaching ELLs and their English L1 peers, both in the capacity of an instructor, as well as an ECE, during my four years of practice teaching as a pre-service teacher (teacher in training) and as a volunteer since. In addition, I taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Italy for two summers, and lastly, provided English lessons at one primary school in the People's Republic of China. I have a vested interest in the formal education of all students and, more particularly, in teaching English to ELLs and their English as Foreign Language (EFL) counterparts.

It is my teaching philosophy that every student is unique in his or her own way. As members of the teaching profession, I believe that it is our responsibility to inform our practice to meet the unique personalities and learning needs of our students in order to guide them to their full potential. Throughout my six years of experience in working both in the formal classroom as a pre-service teacher and emergency occasional teacher, and through the many informal learning environments I have encountered in my many years of travel, I have come to appreciate the value of learner-centered instruction to meet the specific needs and interests of that group of students, the importance of universal design to accommodate the various learning styles, and the on-going need to afford quality learning opportunities to those who have not had access to suitable programming to advance their academic interests. As for ELLs, there is still so much unknown and a long way to go in giving them the requisite support. It was anticipated that this research study would provide me the opportunity of understanding the phenomenon of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario and subsequently provide evidence as to where additional support is required.

What initially prompted my interest in researching the perspective of junior-level ELLs of EAL programming in Southwestern Ontario was one of my pre-service teaching experiences in an inclusive elementary school classroom. An operational definition for an inclusive classroom would be a learning setting where students of different learning needs, including those in special education programming, EAL programming and at-risk students, are integrated into the mainstream classroom with their peers who would do not require any of the aforementioned additional in-school programming (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006; Cohen, 2012; Jordan, Schwartz, Eileen, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009; López & Iribarren, 2014; OME, 2009). There was an ELL at a very basic English language proficiency level who had joined the class mid-way through the school year, having transferred from a different school (the reason is unknown to me). This ELL had only been in Canada for a year. She had been placed part-time in an ESL resource support program where she worked intensively with the school's EAL teacher four hours per week, but the majority of her educational experience was spent in the mainstream classroom, where all instruction is delivered in English to her L1 peers and do not require any additional in-school programming (Cohen, 2012).

As part of my pre-service practicum, I spent a considerable amount of time working with this ELL one-on-one with a modified curriculum when the homeroom teacher was teaching the ELL's English L1 peers. Due to restrictions pursuant to the Government of Ontario's (1990) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, I was provided with only limited background information on this student. Accordingly, I was only advised that this student had spent an entire year at another school in Southwestern Ontario prior to transferring to the school of which I was placed

and that the goal was to raise her English language proficiency to a level where she could more fully participate in the regular programming/curriculum for Grade 3.

What astounded me most about this experience was what was apparently being done with this student when I was not in the classroom or working with her directly. For lack of time, specialized training or not knowing otherwise, my associate teacher was providing the ELL with handouts to colour, books from the classroom to look at or worksheets from what appeared to be from the kindergarten classroom. These activities and/or assignments appeared to lack a direct focus/learning objective and did not necessarily relate to the subject matter being delivered to the mainstream class. In addition, the content did not appear to engage the ELL as she continually yawned, asked to go to the washroom, stood up to sharpen her pencils and sought out opportunities to interact with her peers sitting within her proximity.

Despite the best of intentions and due diligence of a conscientious homeroom teacher who unfortunately did not have any formal training in English language instruction, the ELL's academic level of achievement and level of English language proficiency did not appear to be progressing at any noticeable rate over the five months I periodically worked with her in that classroom. Similarity when I was placed in other schools as a pre-service teacher and a few years later in a volunteer capacity, I saw numerous other instances where ELL's were provided with busy work at a significantly lower grade level or materials not related to the subject matter being taught. When I inquired as to what other resources were available, to help the ELL I was advised that apart from resources related to English language instruction, it was up to the classroom teacher to create and/or modify exiting materials used in the mainstream classroom. In

addition, it came to my attention through casual conversation that very few of these mainstream classroom teachers had any form of formal or informal training in teaching and or meeting the learning support needs of ELLs.

Academics aside, there was also an apparent issue with regards to the social aspect of being a part of the classroom community. When it came to going outside for recess or engaging the ELL in small group work, this also appeared to be a struggle. Students in the class did not want to interact with the ELL. My associate teacher informed me that there had been complaints from the ELL's English L1 peers relating to her aggressiveness. From my observations, it became quickly apparent that due to her inability to communicate in English, she would get physical to get the attention of her peers. There appeared to be a lack of action and/or conversation about this ongoing issue in the classroom so it became a reoccurring theme. Despite my intervention and trying to develop a better understanding of the relationship between the ELL and her English L1 peers, the ELL's peers continued to avoid her. In hindsight, I wondered how it was possible for this ELL to learn English, let alone meet other curriculum expectations, with limited EAL instruction and feeling so alienated and alone. Unfortunately, this and other similar scenarios appear to be out of the control of the teacher and/or administration due to the demand for specialized services exceeding existing resources.

With this background experience and having since ascertained that ELL's are lagging by at least five years in developing English language competency and are resultantly struggling in meeting the rigorous learning objectives of core subject areas (Jang et al., 2013; Jang et al., 2015), this proposed connection prompted my interest even

further in completing research on the phenomenon at hand- the experience of learning English as an additional language for junior-level Southwestern Ontario ELLs.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Foundations and Review of Literature

This chapter begins with an overview of three influential theoretical foundations in understanding Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and research relating to successes in the second language learning process from the perspective of various stakeholders. The discussion then turns to a review of literature relating to the perspective of the second language learner in general, and then more specifically, that of junior level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario.

Theoretical Foundations

Theories of language acquisition. Over the course of the last forty or more years there have been multiple theories presented to explain the observed phenomena of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). VanPatten and Williams (2007) suggested that these theories have played an important role in the field of SLA in explaining the following ten observations based on empirical findings:

- “Exposure to input is necessary for SLA;”
- “A good deal of SLA happens incidentally;”
- “Learners come to know more than what they have been exposed to in the input;”
- “Learner’s output (speech) often follows predictable paths with predictable stages in the acquisition of a given structure;”
- “Second language learning is variable in its outcome;”
- “Second language learning is variable across linguistic subsections;”
- “There are limits on the effects of frequency on SLA;”

- “There are limits on the effects of a learner’s first language;”
- “There are limits on the effects of instruction on SLA;”
- “There are limits on the effects of output (learner production) on language acquisition” (pp. 9-12).

To simplify consideration of these ten observations, Ortega (2007) suggested that they could be combined into five areas, namely: “the nature of second language knowledge, the nature of interlanguage development, the contributions of knowledge of the first language, the linguistic environment, and instruction (pp. 225-226). For the purposes of this research, three of the more prominent SLA theories have been briefly discussed and referenced later in light of the aforementioned ten observations when discussing the themes that emerged from the findings.

Psycholinguistic theory. The psycholinguistic theory of SLA examined how language is processed, stored and retrieved from memory in addition to exploring how language acquisition and performance is impacted by cognitive capacity (Thorne & Smith, 2011). Psycholinguists view language as a “system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning” (Richards & Rogers, 1982, p. 155). For one to learn a system of language one must acquire an understanding of grammatical units and operations and have the cognitive capacity to process store and retrieve information

White (2007) suggested that linguistic competence of L1 learners is not necessarily learned nor determined by the input children are exposed to, but rather derived from unconscious “innate, built in knowledge” stemming from Universal Grammar (UG) (p. 37). Similarly, White (2007) suggested that inter-language competence of L2 learners also involves “unconscious mental representations” (p. 39).

As such, in light of the ten observable phenomena White (2007) argued that L2 competence is underdetermined by input (although input can serve as a trigger); L2 learners come to know certain properties of the L2 unrelated to frequency and without input; and although UG cannot be taught, instruction can trigger the resetting of parameters.

Interaction Model. Rosmawati (2014) believed that the acquisition and development of a primary and/or secondary language resulted from interactions between, “the individual and the environment of which the language is learned and used” (p. 66). This model of language learning contemplated a link between the three components of interaction: namely exposure (input), production (output) and the resultant feedback. In the context of L2 learning, Gass and Mackey (2007) believed that the input was what the learners use to form linguistic hypotheses; output served to provide for syntactic usage of language, test hypotheses relating to the L2 and promoted routine usage of language; and lastly, explicit and implicit feedback provided the opportunity to determine problematic aspects in the learner’s inter-language and greater opportunity to focus on the required production and/or comprehension. This interaction allowed the learner to determine the gaps between what the learner wanted to express, but couldn’t in the learner’s inter-language and resultantly promoted the development of the L2 (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

When looking at the Interaction Model of language learning in light of the ten observable phenomena suggested by VanPatten and Williams (2007), it is clear that there is a heavy reliance on input; there is some incidental learning resulting from interaction; there are variable outcomes and/or results based on the learners’ cognitive capacity; the impact of frequency will depend on whether the learner takes notice of the input; and

although there are limits on the effects of output, pushing the limits requires the learner to stretch his or her linguistic resources (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

Sociocultural Model. As explained by Lantolf and Thorne (2007) the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of language acquisition derived from the writings of psychologist Vygotsky who believed “that mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities and concepts” (p. 201) and since social interaction is primarily facilitated by language, language is a very powerful tool (Simeon, 2016). Furthermore, Norton and Toohey (2011) have claimed that the SCT has brought about a change in viewing learners as individuals internalizing systems of language to those who are differentially positioned members of social collectives using language as a dynamic tool.

As suggested by Ortega (2007) the sociocultural theoretical model stands apart from the aforementioned models and/or theories, as language cognition is best understood as a social faculty and not as a psychological or linguistic faculty of the mind. As such, culturally valued activities using cultural tools play a significant role in the language learning process with ELL’s utilizing mediating strategies such as scaffolding; use of L1; the utilization of inter-language; and the externalization of private speech (Simeon, 2016). Lantolf and Thorne (2007) argued that the Sociocultural Learning Theory “does not separate the individual from the social”, but rather “the individual emerges from social interaction and, as such, is always fundamentally a social being” (p. 218).

As for the ten observable phenomena and SCT, Lantolf and Thorne (2007) suggested the following: Exposure to input is not only achieved through social interaction but vicariously through written word; there cannot be incidental learning as there are no

passive learners; L2 acquisition is variable in its outcome and depending on the goals and the type of mediation, different learners adopt different linguistic subsystems; and although L1 forms have limited effect on second language acquisition, L1 meanings influence L2 acquisition.

Approaches to success in language instruction and learning. Over the past century, there have been nine formal approaches to foreign language teaching reflective of theoretical models such as those discussed above. Each approach featuring its own focus provides for its own set of instructional techniques and learning methodology.

Celce-Murcia (1991) has provided the following explanation for the evolution of these nine approaches beginning with the more traditional Grammar Translation Approach. As it was suggested that learners were not able to actually use the language they had studied, the Grammar Translation Approach with its focus on analysis of structures was challenged by proponents of the Direct Approach that has a focus on language usage. Shortly thereafter came the Reading Approach as a reaction to the lack of practicality of the Direct Approach. The Audio-Lingual Approach was presented next as a reaction to the lack of focus on oral-aural skills that came with the British Situational Approach. Behaviourists then introduced the Cognitive Approach in reaction to limitations to the Audio-lingual Approach. Not long after, the Affective-Humanist Approach was presented in reaction to the lack of affective consideration in other approaches and the Comprehension- Based Approach based on the assumption that L2 learning is similar to first language acquisition. Lastly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), viewing language as a system of communication, gained popularity as it viewed “language as a system for communication” (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 6). Each

approach, reflective of one of the many models and/or theories of language acquisition, has had both its challenges and successes in meeting the learning needs of ELLs (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Successes in language instruction and learning. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in addition to several other programs and strategies purporting to provide increased success for second language learners will now be described.

The CLT approach to teaching an additional language derived from a wide variety of disciplines including, but not limited to, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and educational research (Savignon, 2007). Building on the beliefs of Krashen (1982) that language cannot be learned, but rather acquired through common day communication, and with language being a fundamental or primary means of human social interaction, Savignon (2007) suggested that CLT has garnered popularity with both instructors and students alike. “CLT is an approach that understands language to be inseparable from individual identity and social behaviour. Not only does language define a community; a community, in turn, defines the forms and uses of the language” (p. 217).

With the clear link between language and culture, there is value in an integrative approach so as to allow for the development of sociocultural competence in concert with communicative competence (Saphonova as cited in Savignon, 2007). The communicative approach to teaching contemplates the sociocultural context of language as it allows for sociocultural differences in styles of learning (Savignon, 2007).

The eight core principles of CLT, as suggested by sociolinguist Margie Berns (1990), are summarized as follows:

- Teaching the language is based on the view of language as communication;

- Diversity is acknowledged to be part of the language learning process;
- Competence is relative rather than absolute in relation to correctness of speech;
- Multiple varieties of a language are recognized as models for learning and teaching;
- Culture is seen to play an instrumental role in shaping a speaker's communicative competence in both a learner's first and subsequent languages;
- There is no one prescribed method or technique;
- Language use is acknowledged to serve ideational, interpersonal and textual functions which is related to the learners' competence in each;
- Learners need to be actively engaged in doing a variety of things with language at all stages of learning. Learner attitudes and/or expectations have come to play a significant role in either advancing or impeding change to curriculum.

In addition to the potential for continued and increased success using CLT, other research related to success in language acquisition has provided invaluable insight for those developing and delivering EAL programs. One such study was completed by Lugo-Neris, Wood Jackson and Goldstein (2010) who suggested that use of L1 bridging in L2 instruction provided for significant improvement in receptive language, naming and expressive definitions.

More recently, Cummins, Mirza, and Stille (2012) proposed the Literacy Engagement Framework (Figure 1) as the opportunity to introduce instructional practices

to construct diversity as a resource and affirm the linguistics and personal identities of English language learners to help close any achievement gap.

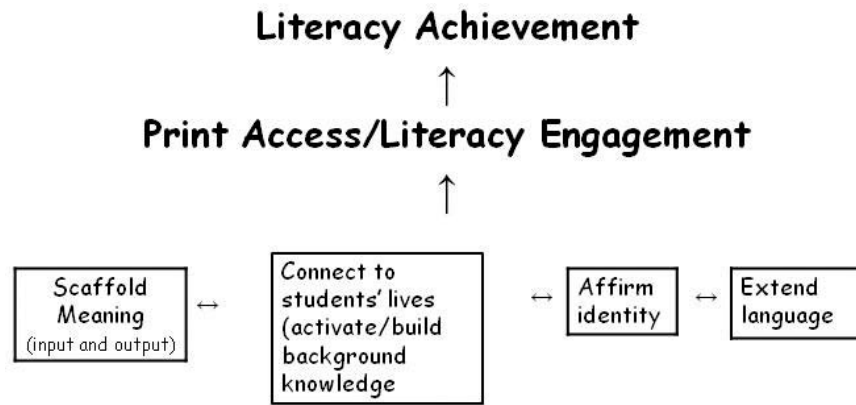


Figure 1. Literacy Engagement Framework (Cummins et al., 2012, p. 32).

According to Cummins et al. (2012), the Literacy Engagement Framework provides for four broad instructional dimensions that are critical to engage all students in literacy learning from an early age. Of particular interest were the following criteria which were suggested to allow for that enhancement of literacy engagement amongst ELLs, namely: the use of instructional strategies and techniques to scaffold the ELL’s use and understanding of the L1; connecting instruction to the lives of the ELLs “by activating the background knowledge often encoded in their L1”; ensuring that the instruction affirms the ELL’s “academic, linguistic and cultural identities” by allowing them to demonstrate accomplishments with literacy in both their L1 and in the L2; and lastly, utilizing teaching strategies to encourage ELLs to draw comparisons between their L1 and the L2 to extend knowledge and control of language across the curriculum (Cummins et al., 2012, p. 33).

Cummins et al. (2012) reported an agreement amongst researchers that there was a strong relationship between literacy engagement and achievement. Furthermore, they

reported that researchers and educators alike saw value in scaffolding in ELL instruction, the importance of building background knowledge and the value of building upon the knowledge of ELLs as to how language works. However, there is yet to be any significant acknowledgment of the role that the L1 plays in advancing academic success.

However, Simeon (2016) completed a very recent study from the sociocultural perspective which determined the following five categories of writing strategies that worked best with ELLs engaged in a group work task: brainstorming, peer-scaffolding, using background knowledge, using humour and using the L1. Examples of use included an L1 guiding another L1 through her Zone of Proximal Development during the brainstorming process; a peer using teacher-like scaffolded questions to help instruct L1 peers when it became evident that her peers did not know what was being asked of them; the use of prior knowledge of films and other theatrical tactics as a mediating strategy during the composition process; the deliberate erroneous use of a suffix by one L1 peer which generated a type of language play essential to L2 learning; and lastly, use of the L1 to explain the subject matter by another student as a mediation mechanism for task management.

Lastly, in determining what other strategies and or approaches provide for an increased opportunity for success for the language acquisition process, the Complex Adaptive System Principles (CASP) model came to light. The CASP model, which has been influenced by a range of psycholinguistic and linguistic research, assists educators in understanding as to why the transfer from an L1 does or does not occur so any necessary changes and/or adjustments can be made (Filipovic & Hawkins, 2013). The model is based on four general principles which consist of minimizing the learning effort,

minimizing the processing effort, maximizing the expressive power and maximizing communicative efficiency (Filipovic & Hawkins, 2013). Therefore, to learn a L2, Filipovic and Hawkins (2013) suggested teachers need to maximize positive transfer, maximize frequently occurring properties, maximize structurally and semantically simple properties, permit negative transfer, and allow for communicative blocking of negative transfer.

There was no mention of any subsequent inquiries related to any difference the application of the principles behind this model would make to success in the EAL classroom; however, it most certainly can be deduced that improvement would be evident if properly utilized.

Understanding the ELL Perspective

The process. While completing this literature review of the perspective of ELLs, I ensured that I met all of the interrelated steps that were addressed by Creswell (2002); namely, identifying key words/key terms that I would use in my search; locating the literature I would be using; reading the literature collected to see whether or not it is relevant; organizing the literature into a map; and lastly, summarizing my findings in my literature review. These steps not only allowed me to look for literature available on the experiences of junior-level ELLs whom are learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario, but also provided further justification as to why my research was both relevant and important for the field of education.

After reviewing what the Ontario Ministry of Education and other researchers have identified as components in creating a positive school/learning environment for ELLs, as well as effective instructional strategies for teachers teaching ELLs both in and

outside of the Ontario EAL classroom context, I turned my literature search to the focus of my research study- the perspectives of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario. I surveyed peer-reviewed articles published between 2005 and 2015 on the ELL perspective using a Boolean search of a variation of the following ten terms/key words that were developed in consultation with my faculty's librarian to define the subject matter of my study and allow me to find relevant literature; namely, English Language Learner (ELL), English as an Additional Language (EAL), elementary school, English as a Second Language (ESL), student perspective, second language learners, learning experience, academic proficiency, academic success, and program effectiveness. The parameter for the dates of published peer-reviewed articles was put in place because in 2005 the Ontario Ministry of Education published *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom*, a document that is still referenced by many EAL and mainstream classroom teachers at both the elementary and secondary level to provide them with teaching strategies, insight and related literature on how to effectively work with English Language Learners. In addition, as highlighted in Chapter 1, numerous resources have since been released to assist educators and administration in ways to best accommodate ELLs in their respective schools. This ten-year period allowed me to see what progress has been made over the course of a decade, and in this instance, for ELLs in Southwestern Ontario.

Unfortunately, based on my literature search using the University of Windsor's library search engine, powered by Proquest and offering access to articles in ERIC and CBCA, as well as Google Scholar, there was no evidence of research having been completed on the perspectives of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario. Thus, I

chose to expand my search in sequence to include research studies relating to the rest of Canada, studies from other predominantly English-speaking countries and, lastly, studies focusing on ELLs' perspective from outside of these geographic parameters. Once I found prospective articles dated between 2005 and 2015, I selected the literature that incorporated and/or revolved around the perspectives of ELLs between the ages of ten and twelve (Grades 4-6 in Ontario). It came to my attention that after surveying literature relevant to the research topic at hand, that there were a limited number of related and/or relevant results on the perspective of both junior-level ELLs and elementary school students in general.

For the purposes of this chapter, discussion of the literature was limited to those articles which provided the junior-level ELL student perspective, as their experiences may be different from those ELLs who are in the primary grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3) and in intermediate (Grade 7-10) and senior grades (Grade 11-12). However, the findings of related articles regarding the broader ELL perspective including the primary grades and the intermediate/senior grades that fell outside of the parameters of this literature search, are shared as applicable in the discussion portion of my paper for comparison with the findings of this study together with the literature found relating to junior-level ELLs.

Findings. As suggested previously, the review of literature was to serve two purposes: 1) to provide additional support and or reasoning as to why recording the perspectives of ELLs was important and 2) to provide any existing insight from those stakeholders. To complete this review in a systematic and orderly manner the relevant peer-reviewed academic articles relating to the perspectives of junior-level ELLs were

divided between the following three categorizations: (a) those studies from outside of predominantly English speaking countries, (b) those studies from predominantly English-Speaking Countries, and (c) those studies from Canada.

Each study was then examined to ascertain both the importance of seeking the perspectives of the primary stakeholders of ELL programming and to determine exactly what junior-level ELLs are disclosing about their experiences at school relating to both their academic experiences and/or their social interactions with the hope of obtaining greater insight as to what is really happening both within and outside Ontario.

Outside of Predominantly English-speaking Countries.

Spain. Muñoz (2014) completed a study that explored the perspective of 76 primary school-age children in Spain who were learning English. In the conclusions, Muñoz refers to the children's voices conveying "insightful information concerning their views about the different aspects and dimensions of FL [foreign language] learning [...] and awareness of the conditions that help them learn English, classroom management issues and of learning-effective strategies" (p. 37). More specifically, Muñoz discovered that school-age children found the traditional classroom configuration best suited to their learning and they preferred activities that focused less on vocabulary development and more on form and oral production. These young students were already full aware of the challenges they will face in in going beyond isolated words to creating sentences.

Additionally, Muñoz asked the primary school-age children about the difficulties they have experienced in the language acquisition process and they made comments relating to the "lack of transparency of English orthography, which stands in contrast with their first language" (p. 37). Muñoz believes that this study has contributed to both

providing a voice to an age group of learners who are under-researched in understanding both learner beliefs and learner awareness as well as the need for increased reflective practice when teaching younger learners.

Predominantly English-speaking Countries.

United Kingdom. Martin (2012) conducted a mixed methods study that canvassed the perceptions of 319 students in the United Kingdom on their attitudes toward the process of learning a foreign language. Although the second language was not English in this instance, the results of this study were extremely revealing as to what students liked and disliked about their language program; what worked for them in the classroom setting; and what they liked or disliked about teaching styles. Examples of preferred pedagogical practices included the teacher's incorporation of actions, visuals, and group/pair/team work/activities into lessons; however, on the other hand, the students were not fond of constantly playing English games, repeating what the teacher says, and learning and memorizing words and pronunciations. Martin (2012) also highlighted what motivated the students and what else they learned about themselves in the process. Much, if not most of this aforementioned insight could not have been obtained from teacher and/or parent perspectives alone. For example, this study revealed that students found language learning in the early stages to be a less challenging and more fun-filled experience whereas later on to keep their interest, there had to be more variety and text-based work (Martin, 2012).

Australia. Wielgosz and Molyneux (2015) identified the struggles of ELLs within the classroom environment due to their lack of English language and cultural competency, as well as their struggles with identity outside of the classroom. In response

to these struggles, a program that involved visual arts being taught by a specialist teacher was implemented at six primary level schools. Through twelve classroom observations, interviews with six teachers, and group interviews with ELLs from Grades 3-6 (four of which were discussed in this report), it was found that the use of the visual arts could be an excellent tool in developing ELLs' identities, which in turn, are "essential in our current era of increased linguistic and cultural pluralism..." (p. 275). The students disclosed that this art program allowed them to be themselves in school; allowed them to feel happy in the school environment where they felt accepted by those around them; and lastly, provided them with choices, which in turn instilled a sense of autonomy.

United States. Rodriguez, Ringler, O'Neal and Bunn (2009) undertook a study to determine the ELL perception of the school environment. As it worked out, the 66 ELLs and their 57 L1 counterparts at a school in rural North Carolina shared a very similar opinion of the school climate and their learning environment. Rodriguez et al. (2009) were surprised to find that there was no real difference in perception between the two groups relating to the curriculum and/or with instructional techniques across the grades and their enjoyment attending school. However, it was evident that there remained a definite need for additional support of ELLs to address the lower graduation rate of Latino students. It was suggested by the researchers that this could be achieved through increased teacher training in instructional techniques for teaching ELLs, similar to that which is required in Florida where their graduation rate of Latino students is much higher.

Taboada, Kidd and Tonks (2010) completed a study seeking the Grade 4 ELL perspectives of autonomy support in the literacy classroom. This study indicated that to

ensure choice and to lead toward a desired goal there had to be a balance between structure and scaffolding. This may not have been ascertained had not the perspective of the ELLs been sought out.

Howard (2012) investigated reading support and book preferences of three ELLs in Grade 4. Through observations and interviews with the ELLs, Howard learned of the struggles the students experienced while trying to read in English and what they said had helped them in the process. In addition, Howard (2012) discovered that the students had a strong interest in fiction books and graphic novels, and that they read outside of school only if their parents encouraged them to do so. It was suggested that this student perspective in turn could serve as a basis for teachers to create programs and classrooms that more effectively accommodate ELL learning style, foster greater “autonomy and self-efficacy, and instill a desire in ELLs to read” (p. 126).

Hickey (2012) conducted a hermeneutical phenomenological study of the experiences of two Spanish-speaking participants in Grades 3 and 6 from the state of New York. While meeting with these students she listened to their perspectives as they relayed their stories of being brought into and experiencing the public educational system as an ELL. She acknowledged the benefits of listening to the students’ perspectives because she was granted the opportunity to un-learn her experiences and personally reflect on the revelations she had encountered while in discussion with these students (p. 160). Some topics that were discussed included the happiness and sorrow of students moving away from their homeland against their will; being labeled by their teachers and peers; the anxiety behind the process of reading and speaking in front of peers; the preference for subject areas which can be done with limited English competency; the

acknowledgement that school is seen as a lot of work that has to be done and is not necessarily enjoyed; and the determination to escape the possibility of being considered a lower level student.

Nykiel-Hebert (2010) selected twelve refugee children from Iraq who were between the ages of eight and eleven (Grades 3- 5) and were living in New York. They were placed in the mainstream classroom and also received an hour of specific English language instruction each day. The author addressed multiple themes relating to the ELLs experiences, such as but not limited to being given busy work and experiencing cultural tensions. In this study the low performing ELLs from Iraq were taught in a self-contained culturally homogenous classroom. Nykiel-Hebert (2010) had the opportunity to gain insight from her participants about their experiences of being in this classroom and she drew the conclusion that ELLs learning in an environment where they are all culturally the same could be advantageous for them since these students would have more opportunities to further their academic performance, develop a stronger sense of self and their culture, and also learn to value and respect American culture. From Nykiel-Hebert's (2010) viewpoint and the insight shared from her students, the successes of ELLs can be attributed to the same cultural background being in the same classroom just as white middle-class students in the United States perform collectively well as a group (Conclusions section, para. 8). This was the case because there was "congruence between the home and the school cultures" (Conclusions section, para. 8). The author recognized that without the transcriptions from audiotaped dialogues and narratives, as well as the ELLs' written work; this study would not have brought this new cultural perspective on the research being done.

Irizarry and Williams (2013) sought out the perspective of middle school Latino migrant students in Western Michigan. This mixed methods study brought to light the distrust of teachers by this student population and that they would have preferred more teachers of the same ethnicity as them. As in the research completed by Nykiel-Hebert (2010), this insight could not have been reasonably ascertained by surveying the perspective of anyone other than the students themselves.

Cohen (2012) explored the educational experiences of three Mexican adolescent ELLs who were in a multi-grade advanced EAL class in the southwestern United States who had been enrolled in the American school system for at least five years. Despite the age group of these three participants exceeding my focus of gathering literature revolving around the perspectives of junior-level students in Grades 4-6, their perspective could still be considered as these participants experienced being an ELL during the junior-level grades as well as middle school and part of high school. Cohen (2012) used a combination of 75 hours of observation with numerous formal semi-structured interviews with each student in concert with daily informal conversations with the teacher. The findings from this study indicated two primary themes, which included the ELLs feeling comfortable in their learning environment, but with the academic rigor of the work assigned to them as not challenging or meaningful, and that the ELLs perceived the work to not be beneficial for future careers and life after graduation. Having been exposed to the mainstream classroom for at least one course (which may not require as much English language competency), angst and frustration developed amongst these ELLs because they felt their EAL programming was more limiting than helpful. Given their positive limited experiences in the mainstream classroom, they assumed that they would also have had

positive experiences in classes that require more English language competency. Leaving the EAL classroom and taking classes in the mainstream classroom was viewed as the means to achieve their future aspirations.

Outside of the ELL context, but staying within the framework of student perspective for junior-level students, Downer, Stuhlman, Schweig, Martinez, and Ruzek (2015) conducted a study where American students in Grades 4 and 5 answered surveys regarding effective student to teacher interactions. The premise behind this study was to ensure that the growing phenomenon of teacher evaluations in the United States was validated using different assessment tools, as these sorts of surveys can provide meaningful information, and the interactions of teachers with their students could be predictive of their students' academic and social successes (Gazelle, 2006, as cited in Downer et. al). They stated that there is a lack of literature on student perspective from this respective age group; whereas literature was more commonly found on the perspective of students in middle school to the older grades. Their findings indicated that the classroom reports amongst the classes of students were consistent, but student reports varied due to the difficulty of the students looking at student-teacher interaction outside of their own respective experiences. It was suggested that this finding was due to the students' age, but nevertheless, gathering information of the perspectives of students could be more effective than that of just observation and it provided a means to look at the impact of these interactions of students and other "subgroups" such as gender and race/ethnicity (p. 746). Moreover, it was suggested that student perspective can provide invaluable insight to researchers because the student's attention may be drawn to something other than that which an observer may make note of and that "there is

something meaningful to be learned about the quality of teacher-student interactions by aggregating these varying experiences of multiple students within a classroom” (p. 748).

Canada. Carr (2009) wrote an article based out of British Columbia, Canada about the reasons why her participants (Grades 5-6) decided to participate in an intensive French program and then drew comparisons to the academic performance of students who did not participate in this program. Amongst these junior-level participants were forty-three ELLs whom were at an intermediate or advanced level of English language competency. Although this article did not relate to the learning experiences of ELLs in the EAL context, the author did provide insight as to the reasons why ELLs participated in this sort of program and later discovered that these participants’ English language abilities improved as well. The ELLs’ reasoning for enrolling in this program provided insight in better understanding one of the themes that emerged from the findings of my research with ELLs of this same age group.

Carr (2009) came to discover that half of the ELLs’ parents made the decision for them to participate; a quarter of the ELLs made the decisions themselves; and the other quarter made the decision in consultation with their parents. This ‘painted a picture’ of the family dynamics of some ELLs. As for other themes that emerged from her study, students indicated in their answers, most prevalent to least prevalent, that they were interested in the program because it provided them with more opportunities for employment and further education; French is the second official language of Canada; it allows them the opportunity to achieve better grades; other siblings have also experienced education in the immersion setting; and lastly, the students are up for the challenge of learning yet another new language.

As touched on previously, Cummins et al. (2012) sought to determine that which is most important in the promotion of academic success for ELLs in Canadian schools. Through the use of literacy and academic learning experiences of Grade 7 ELLs from the Greater Toronto Area, it was proposed that the students' (both ELL and L1) level of engagement with literacy was a determinant for their literacy achievement. It was determined that the ways to promote this engagement is through teacher-student scaffolding for meaning, connecting the lesson to the students' lives, uphold the unique identities of students, and guide the students so they can become more aware and informed of language that is used in the curriculum. Although this group of students is a year older than the participants of my proposed inquiry, this study illustrates the value of student perspectives.

On a related note, Broomes (2013) wrote an article sharing her quantitative analysis of the effects of immigration and the primary language of students' at home on the EQAO (Educational Quality and Accountability Office) scores and their respective achievement over time. The scores she analyzed were those of students who wrote the EQAO in Grades 3 and 6. Although Broomes's (2013) study did not collect qualitative data on the experiences of junior-level ELLs per se, the findings did indicate, "Grade 3 proficiency is the strongest predictor of students' performance in Grade 6" (p. 15). She also found that students born abroad who immigrated to Canada perform better on standardized testing than Canadian-born students who spoke a language other than or in addition to English. In her words, "Something must have happened between Grade 3 and Grade 6 to foster their proficiency in Grade 6" (p. 15). These results left Broomes (2013) wondering why these students could still achieve academic success despite the obstacles

to their academic learning both in and outside of the classroom relating to power and the resultant feelings of inferiority. If she had had access to other variables such as the demographics of the ELLs to try to correlate academic success or lack thereof, as well as other factors of the students' school experiences including school climate and teachers' expectations, this would have provided her with the means for a more in-depth analysis as to why there was the aforementioned gap.

Summary

The literature reviewed in preparation for this research study indicated first and foremost that limited research has been completed relating to the perspective of junior-level English Language Learner's (ELLs) enrolled in EAL programming in publically funded schools in Ontario. In fact, the ELL perspective of the educational experience was lacking even at the broader national and international level. This group of stakeholders in the educational system, visa-vie the research process, have not been provided with enough of a formal voice to bring to attention what they experience individually or as a whole, and any ensuing needs and/or concerns in reaching their academic potential. Moreover, within the findings of these peer-reviewed articles, the authors have stated that more research should be conducted for this age group of ELLs; variables that may affect student performance should be furthered explored; and/or that there are benefits to collecting data from the perspective of the student. Based on the findings of my literature review, I am convinced that my research study can contribute towards the research relating to this topic and also serve as a foundation for future research of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Knowing that my research topic would take a phenomenological approach using narrative-like research methods with the anticipation of capturing the essence of the phenomenon, I had to put serious consideration into which philosophical assumption and theoretical framework would be most conducive to highlighting the academic and psychosocial experience of learning English as an additional language (EAL) for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs); and which approach to phenomenology I would use to address my proposed research question and the resultant sub-questions (See Table 1).

Research Framework

Table 1. Components of Research Framework.

Philosophical Assumption	Ontological
Interpretive Framework	Social Constructivism
Methodology	Qualitative
Approach	Inductive & Deductive
Research Design	Transcendental Phenomenology
Data Collection Methods	Semi-structured interviews, Participant Journal, and Secondary Documents

To begin, my philosophical study was of an ontological nature. As such, I endeavored to learn about the nature and characteristics of the phenomenon being studied

with the use of multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). It is through the narratives of multiple participants where a researcher identifies themes from the perspectives given. Referring back to my example of the ELL during my placement, I cannot state that her particular experience is the same for every ELL in an EAL resource support program in Southwestern Ontario; however, I was curious as to how the participants' academic and psychosocial experiences related to that of that one ELL. I wanted to learn more about the respective experiences of various ELLs, the many ways in which they attempted to make sense of them and if there were any common threads.

Secondly, my chosen theoretical framework was social constructivism. According to Creswell (2013), social constructivism involves “individuals seek[ing] understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 24) and that the research to be conducted “[relies] as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (p. 25). Since I interpreted and analyzed data collected from the perspectives of the participants over the course of several months; identified overlapping themes within the data relating to the phenomenon of learning English as an additional language in the Southwestern Ontario classrooms; and given that the primary source of data for my proposed research came from the voices of ELLs currently enrolled in EAL resource support programs in the Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools, a social constructivist framework was best suited to meet the objectives of my research.

With the provisions that were put in place during the data collection phase of my study, as well as the ethical concerns that could have come about, such as, the matter that in-class observation could distract the participants and their peers from their respective lesson(s), staff members could feel uncomfortable with me going into their work

environment in the capacity of a researcher, and/or compromising the confidentiality of the participants' involvement, I chose to vicariously live the participants' in-school experiences exclusively through what was shared with me one-on-one at a later point in time by the participants. As such, data collection was accomplished through individual semi-structured interviews outside the classroom, as well as through individual meetings where the participants shared their journals and secondary documents. Furthermore, since I was seeking the perspective of the ELL student, any observations in the classroom and the drawing my own conclusions of what was observed would have served no purpose in furthering my research objectives.

Lastly, under the umbrella of my chosen philosophical assumption and theoretical framework, is the chosen approach to this study: transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In contrast to a narrative study which "reports the experiences of a single or several individuals", a phenomenological research study focuses on creating a common meaning of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon and then reducing these individual experiences down to essence of the phenomenon (a collective description of the experiences for the participants) (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). In the case of this research study, the common experience amongst the participants was learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools. However, it should be duly noted that despite the research study being a phenomenological study, there were elements of a narrative research study ingrained in the data collection process. Similar to that of a narrative research study, I collected stories from participants and retold these stories; however, I did not go through the process of "chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 70) as

would have been the case in a narrative study. In accordance with the approach suggested by Moustakas (1994), I wanted to tie these experiences within the phenomenon under study into a bigger picture and create an overall description of the essence of the phenomenon for the participants, with the ultimate goal of describing what was experienced and how it was experienced within the phenomenon of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario.

Another reason why I decided to use a transcendental phenomenological approach was because I wanted to put aside my previous experiences working with and teaching ELLs in the classroom and meet with a group of new ELLs that I had never taught, volunteered for or come into contact with prior to my study so I could reduce any bias and listen to their experiences with a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). As discussed in more detail later on, I delved into the data I collected from the semi-structured interviews (the transcribed script), personal notes from the interviews, the ELLs' journal entries (both written and orally communicated in English) and the supporting documents the participants shared with me. The data collected from these sources was reduced to common themes, which have been developed through the grouping of 'significant statements' (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This data has since provided me with a means to understand the nature of the phenomenon at hand- learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools for junior-level ELLs. Having not lived through this phenomenon firsthand, I had the opportunity to vicariously do so through the collective stories and contents that the participants decided to share with me. Throughout the data collection period I continued to inquire to gain an increased understanding of the phenomenon at hand from the perspectives of the participants, whom are the consumers

of the product and services the public school system offers them. This allowed me to reconfigure my understanding of the phenomenon to reach a point at the end of my study where I have constructed a description of the phenomenon having used a scaffold of lived stories (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Design

When I decided that I wanted to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study, on the foundation of a social constructivism framework with a ontological philosophical assumption, I had to decide as to what means would be the best suited to address my research question and its sub-questions. Creswell (2013) described some of key characteristics of conducting qualitative research. Some of these characteristics comprised of the “researcher [serving] as a key instrument” in the study; utilizing “multiple methods” for data collection; using “complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic”; drawing up the research study based on “emergent design”; and viewing data from a “holistic account” (pp. 45-47). The following sets out the significance of the aforementioned characteristics in relation to this study.

Firstly, the methods I utilized for data collection involved me being the primary instrument of my research. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants, analyzed their journal submissions and lastly, reviewed the secondary documents they felt comfortable with sharing. Given these data collection methods, I could not have been in the peripheries of data collection because in order to stay true to my chosen framework (social constructivism) I needed to develop an understanding/perspective of the participants’ experience during the phenomenon of learning English as an additional language in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools.

Secondly, as highlighted above, multiple methods in this research study were used; namely, audio recorded semi-structured interviews with ELLs, optional journal entries for ELLs to maintain, and the collection of secondary documents that included artifacts/school documents. All of these methods were conducted in a safe and ethical manner under the clearance of the Tri-Council Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor in conjunction with the expressed permission of a school board located in Southwestern Ontario, and a community agency also situated in Southwestern Ontario. In my ethical clearance application, I addressed any potential complications and challenges that could have happened during this study and ways I would overcome these challenges if any of them had come to light. These challenges and the means by which they have been addressed are discussed later in this chapter.

Thirdly, the qualitative research study I conducted involved the analysis of the data to find different significant statements, identifying patterns, categories and/or themes in the research, and deliberating through my own subjectivity as to where certain data fit when completing my analysis (Creswell, 2013). Given the fact that my study was conducted with an ontological philosophy, I have embraced the multiple realities of the participants' and then identified significant statements that were then organized into themes.

Fourthly, since the design of this research study was based on a social constructivist approach, I kept building my understanding of what the world of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario was like and how this was experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2013). The more data I collected, the more evident it became that there were some commonalities among the content that was shared with me. As patterns in the data

were noticed, I honed in on these particular themes and adjusted the general questions asked of the participants in the initial stages of the study to become more specific in subsequent interviews. Moreover, if a participant provided me with significant statements describing his or her experience within the phenomenon at hand and I wanted to learn more about the topic he or she spoke of, I asked additional questions to the set of semi-structured questions I had already prepared to learn more and then followed up in our next interview to acquire more material if required. At no point was my study static; it was continually emerging and became the product of which I write about now.

Lastly, I aimed for this study to take on a “holistic account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47), where I interpreted the data that was collected from the perspectives of the participants, and then formulated this data to see how this could apply to the concerns as outlined in Chapter 1. I did not want to be bound to solely a cause-and-effect relationship between the different aspects of the phenomenon as described by the participants, but rather describe the interplay of these aspects. My goal was to gain a better understanding of the greater phenomenon through those who were experiencing it firsthand and then share it with my readers.

Research Question

How does the educational experience of junior-level English Language Learners (ELLs), currently registered in EAL resource support programs in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools, relate to ELL’s achievement of short and long term academic success and psychosocial wellbeing?

Sub-Questions.

- How can student outcomes be used to measure academic success?

- What are the learning support programs/services in place for junior-level ELLs?
- What is the ELL perspective of the educational experience (both academic and psychosocial)?
- What are the implications of this student perspective for EAL programming in Ontario publicly funded schools?

Sample Size/ Participant Selection/ Site

Sample size. Purposeful sampling was utilized when selecting participants to ensure that the participants were conducive to the design and purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). The recruitment and selection criteria for my pool of six to ten participants was based on the following:

- A mix of male and/or female junior-level (ages 10-12) ELLs.
- Must attend a publicly funded elementary school in Southwestern Ontario
- Each participant has been enrolled in an EAL resource support program (Coelho, 2007) for at least one year.
- Were drawn from one of at least three different schools
- Are at Stage 3 or higher in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and orientation (OME, 2008a).

I decided to narrow the study down to junior-level ELLs because these ten to twelve-year-old students will be in or nearing Piaget's formal operational stage of cognitive development. As such, they will be capable of thinking hypothetically and reason deductively as they would be in the position of being able to think what might be and what could be (Kail & Zolner, 2009). Ideally, it would be beneficial if the participant were able to envision alternatives and/or abstract ideas, as well as consequences, when

asked of their thoughts and opinions relating to their educational experience.

Furthermore, as noted in the literature review earlier, there is a lack of research on junior-level ELLs' perspectives on learning experiences involving Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools. Lastly, I am an Ontario Certified Teacher and Registered Early Childhood Educator with teaching qualifications in Primary/Junior (age 3-12) education, EAL education (Part 1) and Special Education (Part 1). With these qualifications, I am able to speak to my knowledge in teaching students at this age and I am aware of the fiduciary role/responsibly of looking out for the best interests of students under my supervision.

The criteria relating to the participants' residency (location and type of grade school, and if currently or have been enrolled in an EAL resource support program) was decided with the intention of designing a study to meet a gap in educational research. There appears to be an absence in literature pertaining to the phenomenon of being an ELL in the mainstream junior-level elementary school classroom and enrolled in an EAL resource support program, also referred to as a withdrawal or pull-out program, where the students spend a portion of their school day or week with their English L1 peers and homeroom teacher, and they spend a portion of their school day or week with their EAL teacher and L2 peers (other ELLs) (Coelho, 2007). Typically, the length of time that an ELL spends in each setting depends on the learning needs of the students and/or the availability of services. The criteria of a requisite period of time in the program allowed participants with the opportunity to have had the necessary period of time to transition into a new school and/or new program, the time to get to know the teacher(s) and have had the chance to develop relationships with English L1 and/or other ELL peers. Noting

the above in conjunction with my understanding of the elementary school system and its programming, I believed that the required minimum of one year in the EAL program would have provided the participant with sufficient time to experience the phenomenon and be able to speak to having lived the experience because this would allow the participants to have time to experience both the mainstream and EAL classroom setting. Furthermore, by selecting participants from three different elementary schools in Southwestern Ontario, I was able to draw on the data collected from each participant at each respective school and see where there were commonalities and where there are anomalies (Creswell, 2013). This allowed me the opportunity to triangulate data from participants of three different schools, which signified that the experiences of participants was not just limited to the case of a single school, but to the greater educational system in Southwestern Ontario. This allowed me to corroborate the experiences of the participants and assist in the process of developing themes/findings, and provide validity to these findings (Creswell, 2013).

My final criterion was to have all participants at a Stage 3 or higher in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and orientation (OME, 2008a). Prior to the ELLs entering a school system, school boards in Ontario assess ELLs as to their proficiency in oral communication, reading comprehension, writing skills and knowledge and understand in mathematics (OME, 2007b, 2008a, 2012). After this assessment, the school boards, in consultation with the ELL's parents, determine which school and/or programming is available to best meet the learning needs of the ELL. After the initial assessment, the ELL in the primary/junior (Kindergarten- Grade 6) division is further assessed to determine which of the multiple stages within the ESL or ELD scales for listening, speaking,

reading, writing, and orientation the student belongs. The lowest level of competency is Stage 1, while the highest level of competency is Stage 4. The reason for choosing Stage 3 as my minimum proficiency criteria was to provide participants with the option of either communicating with me in English (should they prefer to keep content between the two of us) or use translator services to speak in their respective primary language (should they feel open to the prospect of reflecting on their experiences in the presence of another individual).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) describes an ELL's English language competency at Stage 3 as it relates to the following five contexts: listening, speaking, writing, reading and orientation. Stage 3 listening comprehension requires an ELL to be able to understand English in a social context but still requires support in the academic context. Stage 3 speaking is when an ELL has the ability to utilize a number of strategies to initiate and/or engage in discussions and conversation. Competence in both reading and writing at Stage 3 requires an ELL to demonstrate increased independence and accuracy in a variety of activities in various contexts (OME, 2008a). Lastly, Stage 3 orientation involves an ELL to demonstrate an increased appreciation and engagement with his or her new environment (OME, 2008a). The detailed descriptors for each of the aforementioned language components found in this same Ministry document, provided guidance in affirming that the prospective participants possessed the level of competency/proficiency required for the needs of this research study.

Overall, the goal of which I hoped to achieve with my selection criteria was to come close to *homogeneity*, which is to find a group of participants who have commonalities that are important to the study at hand and avoid major differences that

would impact their experience within the phenomenon I am studying (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As indicated in the selection criteria, I have addressed the age range, the geographic location of the participants and their respective schools, the type of school that the participants were enrolled in, the English language competency each participant had, the programming each participant was involved in, the length of time each participant had experienced the phenomenon at hand, and lastly, have gone beyond a single school case study and opted for three or more schools to allow for the opportunity for triangulation from the perspectives of multiple participants from three different schools using three methods of data collection (Tracy, 2010).

I contemplated the inclusion of additional criteria to make my sample of ELLs more homogenous, such as the sex of the participants; the race of the participants; the religion of the participants; the primary language of the participants; the descent of the participants; whether they are Canadian-born or immigrants to Canada; and the socioeconomic status of the area of which the participants live (Moustakas, 1994). However, I did not include these additional criteria for several reasons. Firstly, according to Moustakas (1994), the *essential criteria* for selecting participants in a phenomenological study is that each participant has indeed experienced the phenomenon to which the study is focused on; each participant is genuinely interested in “understanding its nature and meanings”; each participant is willing to sit through lengthy interviews; each participant is open to being audio recorded; and lastly, that each participant is agreeable with the publication and use of the data collected for academic purposes (p. 107). Secondly, due to the fact that I had no idea as to how receptive the school boards, community agencies and/or prospective participants’ parents/guardians in

Southwestern Ontario were going to be towards this research, I did not want to set criteria that was so stringent that I would have had difficulty finding participants and then try to convince the aforementioned gatekeepers as to why they should grant me access to prospective participants (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). Moreover, staying true to my social constructivist framework and Moustakas' (1994) description of what makes transcendental phenomenology transcendental, I wanted to see and describe the phenomenon as if it were my first encounter (p. 34). Therefore, a part of the process of me understanding the world of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario was discovering what are the prominent student populations in this geographic location during the recruitment process and then learn from these students' perspectives.

Fortunately, as you will read in more detail in the Chapter 4, the participants I found using the broader criteria I had set during the recruitment stage organically turned into a fairly homogenous set of participants. The sex of the participants was almost evenly split, as four participants were girls and five were boys. Seven of the participants' families descend from Iraq, with one student from Syria and one student from Chad. All but one of the participants' families practices the same faith. All of the participants' families spoke and understood Arabic, with seven referring to Arabic as their primary language at home and two referring to Arabic as their second language. All of the participants and their families immigrated to Canada within the past three years, with one having been born in Edmonton, moved back to Iraq when she was four, and then returned back to Canada when she just turned nine years old. Lastly, the three publicly funded schools of which the participants attended were from areas of lower socio-economic status and, as such, all of them are referred to as compensatory schools.

As for the number of participants, it was suggested by Polkinghorne (1989) that the appropriate number of participants for conducting interviews in a phenomenological study is five to twenty-five (as cited in Creswell, 2013). This proposed number of participants was confirmed by Riemen (1986) who studied ten participants in his phenomenological study (as cited in Creswell, 2013). I decided to limit the number of participants between six and ten so that I would be able to meet the minimum number of participants required of this type of study and keep the size of the participant group manageable for quality data collection. In addition, this sample size of six to ten participants was chosen in case one or more participants were later found not to be suitable or were unable to complete the study due to logistical and/or unforeseen circumstances (i.e. moving out of the area, sickness, etc.). This ensured that out of the participants selected at least six participants would be communicative and open to sharing information with me to assist in the development of a better understanding of the ELL perspective (i.e. providing more than one or two word answers during the semi-structured interview). Additionally, under the advisement of my Research in Education course instructor, the lesser number of participants means that I would have the opportunity to focus more deeply on understanding the lived experiences of participants (C. Cobb, personal communication, March 20, 2015). Smith et al. (2009) confirmed this belief by stating that having a smaller and more homogenous group of participants would allow a researcher the opportunity to “examine in detail psychological variability within the group, by analyzing the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises” (p. 50).

Participant selection. I began the recruitment process by arranging separate in-person meetings with school board officials and with the executive directors (or

designates) of cultural community organizations located in Southwestern Ontario through email and phone correspondence. My first meeting was at a cultural community centre with the centre's youth group director. I introduced myself; stated which university I was from; briefly explained the nature of my study/research interests; explained the criteria of participant selection; mentioned that I received both Tri-Council Policy training and clearance from the Tri-council Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor; assured the director that any information collected on potential participants will be kept strictly confidential; and the participants may withdraw from the study at any time within the first month of the data collection period with no questions or consequences; and lastly, asked permission if I could post a recruitment poster within the facility. The poster I prepared had tear-away tabs at the bottom with my email address so potential participants' and/or parents could contact me. I also asked if there would happen to be a community forum and/or event at their respective center where I would be able to make a brief recruitment speech to inform them of my study and the explain rationale behind this study.

The director informed me that there were prospective participants who fit the participant selection criteria and I could give my recruitment speech directly to them, provide them with my recruitment form (see Appendix B) and have the prospective participants take the form home and explain the study to their parents/guardians. The director added that given the level of English language competency of the participants I recruited for my study, they most likely will have stronger language abilities than their parents. However, should an interpreter be required, her community centre could provide me one in the ELLs' primary language. I accepted the director's offer and gave my

recruitment speech to eight prospective participants at that respective community centre. Following my speech, I provided prospective participants with the time to ask any questions as a group or with me individually. I addressed two questions which involved reiterating that March 1, 2016 should be the final date of data collection and that the students could withdraw from the study at any time during the first month of providing their assent form and parental consent form. I then distributed my recruitment handout entitled, Participants needed for Research Study in Learning English in Ontario (Appendix B) to prospective participants to take home and explain to their parents. Over the course of the three weeks following my initial recruitment speech at the community centre, I heard back from three participants and scheduled individual meetings with each family through email and telephone correspondence. While I was scheduling the meetings, I asked if the participants' parent required an interpreter for our meeting, but each respective parent graciously declined. When I met with each perspective participant and his or her respective parent, I collected the signed and dated recruitment forms that had been sent home previously, explained the details of the study, and lastly, elaborated further on each method of data collection listed on the parental consent and participant assent forms. I then asked both the parent and the participants if they had any questions and/or concerns prior to them signing the forms, and also advised them that they were free to take the forms home to review in the comfort of their own homes and return the following day. All three participants and their parents acknowledged that they understood what was involved in the study and no questions were asked. Each participant and his or her parent signed both the assent and consent forms at that moment. Since the compensation for each participants' respective time was a snack and a drink, I asked the

parents of the participants if their respective child had any food allergies or dietary restrictions (i.e. Halal). The data collection process then began with these three participants.

When I heard back from the Superintendent of Education of Program and Professional Learning of a Southwestern Ontario school board, I scheduled a meeting with that individual to share the information as I did with the director of the community agency. The superintendent advised me that a few schools came to mind for recruiting prospective participants, but suggested that I try one school in particular because it had a large ELL population; the administration had a strong and trusting relationship with the school's ELL community; both administrators had a keen interest in research (one of which has and continues to conduct empirical research with immigrants to Southwestern Ontario); and lastly, the one administrator could serve as an interpreter during the recruitment stage should interpretation be required. The superintendent then advised me that should she would contact the school she had in mind and if that school were not able to accommodate me due to the ongoing provincial labour dispute at that point in time or if I were not able to reach the minimum number of participants required for my phenomenological study, the superintendent would then consider contacting additional schools within that respective school board.

Through email correspondence, the superintendent connected me with the administration of the school I was cleared to approach and I succeeded scheduling an appointment to meet with the aforementioned in person. I met with the school's administration (both principal and vice principal), described the purpose of my study and the criteria of prospective participants. Based on the information I provided, they

provided me with a list of seven prospective students who would meet my selection criteria, confirmed that the methods I was using in my study were fine with them and the one administrator offered to serve as an interpreter (since all of the students listed were fluent in Arabic, as he) while I explained the study to the ELLs to ensure that they understood what the study involved so they in turn could explain it fully to their parents. This special arrangement was made because the administration advised me that arranging a meeting with all of the parents and students at once would be difficult. Similar to the message given by school board's superintendent, the administrator offering the interpreter services added that the administration at that school had developed a very strong relationship with the parents of the prospective participants and the other ELLs in that school community. Typically should parents have any questions and/or concerns relating to their child's attendance and/or behaviour at school that administrator would normally be the first one they would contact. Furthermore, the administrator advised me that if any issues or concerns relating to the study were to be brought to his attention, he would arrange for a telephone meeting or in-person meeting between the prospective concerned parent(s) and I, and interpretation would be provided through administration if required. As it turned out, no need for a meeting and/or an interpreter was ever requested or required.

A week after meeting with the two administrators at the school, the school scheduled a time for me to meet with all of the prospective students for twenty to twenty-five minutes during their fifty-minute 'nutrition break' (lunch time/recess). During this meeting I had the chance to explain the parameters of the study; the rationale behind it; what would be asked of them; where and at what time the interviews would be held; and

what they were offered in compensation for their time. In addition, they were also advised of the option of discontinuing their involvement in the study within the first month of providing me with their consent and assent form and lastly, that they would be responsible for taking the parental consent form home to explain to their parents and returning it the following day. This meeting ended with a question and answer period where the prospective participants had the opportunity to ask any questions or have addressed any concerns they may have had. I will note that despite the students meeting the selection criteria, the content of this entire meeting was interpreted into Arabic by the one administrator to ensure that that everything was completely understood as an added precaution. Once this meeting was finished, parental consent forms were sent home with each potential participant and returned the next day.

Out of the seven students that attended that recruitment meeting, all of the prospective participants' parents approved of their child's involvement in the study; however, later that week one participant advised the administration and I that he and his family were moving away and would no longer be able to participate in the study. For the remaining students who returned their parental consent forms, I scheduled individual meetings to provide each participant with an assent form and explained the purpose behind the form. I then provided each participant with the option of taking the assent form home to complete in the comfort of his or her own home, but every participant completed the assent form during that individual meeting. Once I collected the assent form, I finished each meeting by asking getting to know you questions and asking about any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Research sites. During the initial individual in-person meeting with the director

of the community centre, as well as the superintendent of the school board, I informed them that I would prefer a venue to hold the interviews where the participant is free of distractions and would be comfortable in expressing his or her perspective in a free and open manner. The youth group director of the community centre strongly recommended the community centre as the data collection site since many students (including the ELLs) typically come to the community centre after school and stay there until their parents pick them up in the late afternoon. The director added that there were many empty office spaces near her office; therefore, I would have a private space to collect data. She also advised me that she could be reached at any point in time and this would also address any liability issues. I passed this arrangement by the participants and their parents while I was explaining the assent and consent forms and all parties agreed.

As for the school board, the superintendent advised me that in order to ensure the protection of the ELL as well as myself from any potential false allegations from third party observers both in and outside of the jurisdiction of that respective Southwestern Ontario school board, certain provisions would need to be put in place. The provisions related to time and location. It was determined that data collection would take place during nutritional breaks at the cleared school in a meeting place that is close to the office with an open door. It would be up to the school administration to advise me of the location. When I met with the administration of the school, they offered a table to sit at in either the principal's office, vice-principal's office and/or the office's conference room (all of which had windows and the participant and I were always visible to administration and/or staff in the office). During my initial recruitment meeting with the prospective participants of that school, I mentioned the time(s) and locations of the

interviews/meetings and none of them were opposed.

Data Collection

Multiple audio-recorded individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) describe semi-structured interviews as being, “scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events. They are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviews” (p. 315). Through a combination of email and telephone correspondence, I scheduled meetings to meet with the administration of community agencies and with school board officials and administration to determine the best days of the week and times to drop by my respective supervised research sites and, from that point, I determined with the participants which days they would like to meet to develop an interview schedule. For each participant, I asked him or her in advance if he or she wanted me to hire an interpreter and asked again prior to the beginning of our first interview. In both instances, each and every participant declined.

These audio recorded individual semi-structured interviews were an effective means to collect data for this research because I was able to capture the perspective of multiple participants with “common or shared experiences” and their perceptions of what their experiences mean within the greater phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). This procedure provided me with the opportunity to sit down with the participants to be in an area with limited stimulation for them to think clearly, express their thoughts in a confidential manner, and allow me to develop a rapport with the participants (Smith et al., 2009). By hosting these individual semi-structured interviews in person and allowing me

to audiotape these sessions, I was able to capture what was shared verbatim and interact more freely with the participants with only having to take notes of key points for future questions and or elaboration. I chose to include the option of an interpreter/translator to provide each ELL with the choice of expressing his or herself in either English and/or in his or her primary language in the chance that a participant in this study could be struggling with the use of English to express his or her thoughts. In fact, the use of an interpreter was not only offered, but also encouraged, to ensure that the participants had the opportunity to more fully and effectively communicate in the language of his or her choice. Yet, during the consent process, participants expressed and confirmed prior to their first interview that they did not want an interpreter to be present when we met. Likewise, a translator would have been available to transcribe had any L1 communications been captured digitally and/or provided in written form.

The use of professional interpreters and/or translators in qualitative research involving participants who use their primary language to communicate can help ensure greater reliability and validity of my data. As Lopez, Figueroa, Connor and Maliski (2008) concluded, “it is imperative to transcribe qualitative interviews verbatim, in the participant’s native tongue, and then back-translate so that the true meaning of the participant’s experience is conveyed in the target language” (p. 1737). However, given the fact that all participants from all three schools had been assessed by their respective schools and/or were engaged in programming at Stage 3 or higher in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and orientation; the participants were fully capable of expressing their ideas in the English language; and were very confident in their ability to express themselves fully in English as will be seen in Chapter 4.

In hindsight, not having to have engaged the use of an interpreter during the interviews avoided any possibility of interpreters changing what the participant said or rephrasing what was said if there had been no direct translation in the student's primary language. Furthermore, this one on one opportunity to converse in a more relaxed setting allowed me to develop a good rapport with the participants (Aranguri, Davidson, & Ramirez, 2006). Lastly, staying true to the title of my thesis – *Is Anyone Listening?* – I wanted to be the one who was listening directly from the source as this research was for my personal growth in understanding the phenomenon at hand and taking on the endeavour of utilizing the perspectives of the participants as a platform to share with readers. Hearing them speak the words themselves made it that much more passionate and enlightening. As mentioned above, there are definitely benefits in having an interpreter/translator, but given my selection criteria and respecting the participants' choice, I went this route and stood by my choice.

Building upon the value of capturing communications verbatim as set out above, with the expressed permission of the participant, I used a digital audio recorder to ensure that the message conveyed is captured in its entirety without any inadvertent editing from the onset. The recordings were transcribed for a written record to enhance any notes taken during the interview. These recordings also served as personal memory prompts for key points that I may have missed during the interview. I argue that the use of the aforementioned allowed for a more natural and fluid dialogue, as full contemporaneous note taking was not necessarily a priority. The audio recordings were used exclusively for this purpose and were deleted after the data was fully transcribed and finalized. Every participant agreed to being audio-recorded during the interview.

To strengthen the data, I used the optional loose-leaf written journal where the participants had the opportunity to write about their overall school experience and what happened in their EAL programming on any particular day of their choosing. The participants were asked to write in their journal at least 2 to 3 times a week (or more if they preferred). A set of nine open-ended question prompts, as seen in Appendix A, were included in each journal to provide the students with ideas to begin writing yet not serve to influence and/or limit their thoughts and/or writing. A blank area at the end of each journal entry was also provided for anything else the student would have liked to write and/or draw if he or she had something else to add not relating to the previous question prompts. The participants were given the choice of writing in their primary language, in English or both, but respecting their choice of not involving a translator, English was encouraged.

Each time I met with a participant, which was every two to three weeks or more if the ELL requested to meet in the interim, I briefly reviewed the set of journal entries and discussed the content with the participant. At the end the meeting, photos were taken of participants' journal entries for analysis and each participant continued to work with his/her respective journal. If any clarification and/or further elaboration on details written in any of the journal entries were required, I asked the participant during our meeting. The rationale behind the journal was to provide a means for participants to record an idea and/or something that happened in the school setting the day of as oppose to waiting to share their thoughts with me the next time we met. Furthermore, I began this study with the supposition that some participants may have been more adept at expressing their thoughts in writing and/or have a preference to write as opposed to speaking.

To my surprise, and as was addressed by Creswell (2013), only three participants completed written journal entries despite the participants confirming their interest in maintaining a journal. Both the participants who wrote in their journals and those who consented to keeping a journal expressed that they were interested in writing journal entries; however, writing in general was an endeavour that took too much time. After confirming participant interest in answering the questions in the journal, I asked each participant during our individual meetings if he or she would prefer the option of being asked the journal prompts and then answering for ten to fifteen minutes with an audio recorder. Participants responded unanimously that they would prefer this option and it became evident that they were enjoying these brief meetings.

On multiple occasions, participants saw me through the window of the principal's office, walked into the main outer office, knocked on the glass, and asked me if they could meet with me that day. There was even one instance when a male participant saw me holding an interview through the window of the principal's office, walked into the office, sat beside the participant I was interviewing and waited there quietly for his turn to talk. Fortunately, at the time he walked into the office the actual interview had ended and the female participant and I were just selecting the next time we were going to meet. I had to remind that male participant, and the rest of the participants thereafter, about the proper procedure of waiting in the outer office for their turn to come inside to speak with me. Nevertheless, this alternative method to writing in a journal was well-received as the participants were excited to meet with me to share what had happened to them that day or week and fortunately had the mutual time and interest to have these brief meetings. These recordings were transcribed like the longer semi-structured interviews and

reviewed during the ongoing analysis phase of my study.

The last method of data collection was the photography of secondary sources/artifacts relevant to the educational experiences of the participants currently registered in an EAL resource program. The secondary sources I requested of the participants included IEPs, daily planners, school schedules, copies of student work, notes home, and anything else the ELL and/or his or her parent felt comfortable with sharing that was relevant to the students' in-school experience. Consent for the collection and/or photocopying of such items was included in the parental informed consent permitting their child to participate in this study. The release of any given item was completely up to the participant and his or her parents. Out of the items asked for, I had the opportunity to review student handouts/marked worksheets relating to Science, Math, French and English class; marked quizzes from Math class; a marked assignment and quiz from French class; a note from a student's parent to the teacher; and a student's word study booklet from English class. All of these items were readily shared by the participants following the final question prompt, 'Something I would like to share' (as found in Appendix A). The rationale behind using this method was to add context to the perspective of the participants. For example, if a student referred to an assignment that was completed in class and the student's work was available for viewing, I would be able to envision the experience(s) the participant shared with me in a more concrete way. Any discussions relating to this secondary data collection were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Creswell (2013) stated that interviews are the common source of data collection for phenomenological studies; however, according to Brewer and Hunter (1989), utilizing

only a single method of data collection could weaken the researcher's finding. With this being the case, I decided to select the three aforementioned methods to develop triangulation, which is described as comparing and contrasting the data used from multiple research methods to further verify/support ideas and perspectives in the data based on overlapping themes (Creswell, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004).

Data Analysis

When it came to coding/analyzing the data collected during this qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study, I decided to use Moustakas' (1994) adaptation of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which Creswell (2013) has simplified and promoted in his book (See Figure 2). More specifically, I utilized the following step-by-step process reflective of Creswell's (2013) methodology that comprised of the following:

1. I used bracketing (also referred to as Epoche) prior to the study to situate myself in relation to the phenomenon at hand, reveal any potential bias about the phenomenon, and then honed in on the lived experiences of the participants in the following steps.
2. From the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, journals and secondary sources, I transcribed the data and identified any significant findings through horizontalization, which identifies how each participant had experienced the phenomenon at hand. These significant statements, both positive and negative in nature and considered of equal weight, were then organized into lists "of nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping statements" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193).

3. I then conceptualized and grouped the significant statements into larger categories and/or themes (or *meaning units* in phenomenology). Since this study is of a social constructivism interpretive framework and I wanted to ensure that I had made sense of the world of which the participants were depicting, I engaged in an ongoing review and analysis of data and developed additional open-ended questions to ask of the participants if and when further insight on a theme was required. Once I reached a point of data saturation where the categories/themes that emerged from the data became repetitive and I determined the respective theme(s) had been confirmed, I then moved on to the next step (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).
4. I then described what the participants had experienced with the phenomenon at hand, which is called textural description (Creswell, 2013). To assist in the process of writing and lending support to my description, I included notes of interviews/discussions transcribed verbatim.
5. I then proceeded to describe how the phenomenon happened in a structural description. This was when I added context to the description by reflecting on the physical setting of where the phenomenon was experienced.
6. The final step involved the writing of a composite description that provided the essence of the phenomenon at hand in a few paragraphs. This composite description tied in both the aforementioned textural and structural descriptions created from the preceding steps/components of the analysis.

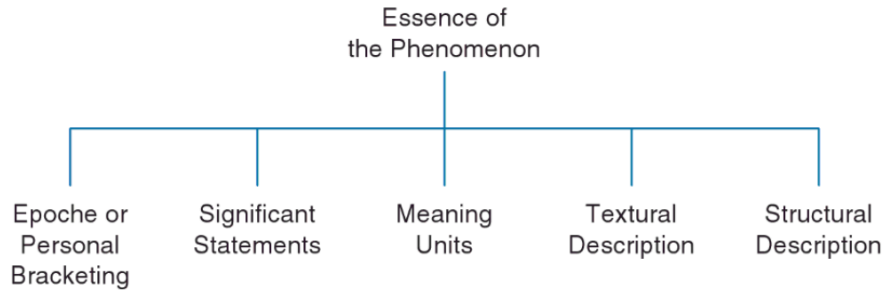


Figure 2. Template for Coding a Phenomenological Study (Creswell, 2013, p. 207).

The three reasons why I chose this methodology for the analysis of the data were (a) to focus on participant words and perspective, (b) to provide for structure and validation, and (c) to provide a foundation for comparison.

Firstly, given the fact that my thesis is based on the premise of understanding the phenomenon of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario from the perspective of ELLs, I wanted to ensure that the methodology chosen placed emphasis on what the participants shared with me. I wanted them to describe the phenomenon using their words and not mine.

Secondly, having been aware that my level of experience in collecting and analyzing data from empirical research was novice, this methodology to my analysis provided me with a structured approach which I found easy to follow and it also provided me with the means to validate the results of my study in numerous ways without changing the structure to the structured methodology provided (Creswell, 2013). In that they played an integral part in my chosen methodology, the strategies that I used to validate my results included bracketing, member checking and triangulation.

For bracketing, I was aware that these research findings were vulnerable to the possibility of me becoming aware of and overcoming multiple subjectivities as I would be viewing the data collection through the eyes of multiple capacities (i.e. researcher,

teacher, early childhood educator, EAL teacher, EFL teacher, special education teacher, etc.), and these different perspectives could cause bias in the results (Freire, 1998). Because of this possibility, I have taken the measure of addressing and reducing potential researcher bias through bracketing, a key component of the chosen methodology to my analysis (Creswell, 2013). According to Giorgi (2009), what is important about reflexivity (similar concept to bracketing) is not the matter of the researcher forgetting his or her past, but rather not allowing what has happened to him or her or what he or she has seen influence the determination of the participant's experiences. By having this component as part of my method readers will be informed of my previous experience with the phenomenon I am studying and it will serve as a reminder as to my purpose for learning about a phenomenon that peaked my interest and committed me to this world I have decided to explore (van Manen, 1990).

Member checking involved me meeting with the participants to verify the content and the meaning of the data collected on that individual participant (Creswell, 2013). Given that the data collection methods I used for this study involved me meeting with the participants on multiple occasions, I had the opportunity to contemporaneously collect and confirm data. This lowered the possibility of taking something said out of a context and/or misconstruing a statement during the semi-structured interview, in journals or when the participant commented on any secondary sources shared with me. Moreover, this also provided participants with the opportunity to clarify what they shared with me in the past.

I triangulated the data with the use of three data collection methods using what is a fairly homogenous group of participants who all satisfied my selection criteria, and

attend three different publicly funded schools (Creswell, 2000; 2013; Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010). This provided me with a strong foundation for the validity of my findings.

Thirdly, the findings found in my textural, structural and composite descriptions allowed me to compare the phenomenon the participants were experiencing with the phenomenon of other ELLs found in my literature review. This comparison also provided the opportunity to review what had occurred in the past with regards to the phenomenon I described and see the growth, if any, when the experiences of these participants were compared with ELLs elsewhere.

Ethical Considerations

While attaining clearance from the Tri-Council Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor, I advised the board that there were risks to be addressed while conducting this phenomenological study and that precautionary measures and/or procedures would be put in place to minimize of the probability of these risks occurring and/or deal with these risks in an effective manner.

The first risk was the possibility of a participant getting upset during an interview because he or she does not enjoy his or her school experience and may have experienced some hardship during his or her school experience (i.e. frustrated with their teacher(s), impatient with one's language acquisition process, etc.). I determined that if a participant had appeared to be getting upset during his/her interview(s), I would have paused the interview and asked the participant if he/she wanted to continue the interview. If the participant had not wanted to continue his/her interviews, I would have ended the session.

The second risk I addressed was the possibility of me seeing secondary documents that could have contained negative assessments and/or low grades. When it came to

collecting secondary documents, I made suggestions of tests, projects, seatwork, agendas and IEPs but left it up to the participants to determine which, if any, documents the participant and his/her parent(s) were comfortable with sharing. If they chose not to provide me with any given document or any documents at all because they were self-conscious about their work or the teacher's the teacher's assessment that was fine with me. I reminded the participant and his/her parent(s) that the documents they shared with me would not be discussed with anyone and all photos of the documents identifying the participant would be secured from public viewing.

The third risk I addressed was regarding the optional journal writing, where the participants may have experienced the same emotions as with the semi-structured interviews. The original intent was for the participants to maintain reflective journals on their own time while they were away from me. I advised participants that if they were to get upset while writing in their journals, they could always stop and revisit writing their thought(s) later. If he or she felt uncomfortable writing any material, he or she could tell me when we met. However, given the circumstance that most participants preferred responding to the journal prompts orally, I took the same measures to ensure comfort as I did when I conducted my semi-structured interviews.

The fourth risk I addressed was the potential misinterpretation of the consent form and the research participants agreeing to participate in the study without fully understanding the research being done. As I have mentioned earlier, the participant selection criteria included selecting participants who were competent enough with the English language that they would most likely not require an interpreter. If I had ever required an interpreter, I had professionals readily available at both research locations.

There were interpreters at the community centre, whom I would have paid out of pocket, and a school administrator who offered complementary interpretation if and when required. This administrator had not only conducted ethical empirical research; learned about a researcher's ethical duty while completing graduate studies, but had already utilized his ability to translate into the L1 during the recruitment process. Furthermore, I provided participants with multiple opportunities to ask for clarification both in the presence of this interpreter and gave them the option of using an interpreter during the data collection process. I also provided a time period of up to one month to withdraw themselves from the study should they have had any reservations about participating in the study or did not enjoy their involvement. At no point during the recruitment phase and data collection period did the participants indicate that they wanted an interpreter or be withdrawn from my study. The same went with the parents of the participants.

The fifth risk was the possibility of participants depicting their respective school(s) in a negative manner during the interview or in their journals or any information provided being misunderstood. I acknowledged that although I could not control the thoughts and opinions of participants during the interviewing and journaling process, I would provide those findings in the context of which they were received. Given the nature of my proposed research, it was expected that participants would be frank when it came to sharing their perspectives and some thoughts and/or sentiments would not necessarily be shared by their respective educators. As such, I ensured that all data was contemplated and any resultant constructive feedback arising from the data was incorporated into this thesis so as not to paint a negative picture nor disparage any educational system in Southwestern Ontario, but rather provide insight into the educational experience (both

academic and social) of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario with the goal to improve these learning experiences. In addition, each time I met with a participant, I would perform member checking, to provide him or her with the opportunity to change and/or clarify what he or she said and/or was saying at that moment to avoid any misinterpretation

The sixth risk was regarding the security of the data (i.e. photos, notes and audio recordings) and possible exposure of participant identity to the public. The risk of any data being leaked for public viewing was highly unlikely because I kept all of my raw data and records inside my house in a locked filing cabinet where the door was locked when I was not present. Electronic data (audio recordings), transcribed notes, and photos of secondary documents were protected by encrypting electronic devices with passwords that have not been shared with anyone. Furthermore, unless required for further review, all data will be disposed on or before sixty days after the successful defense of my thesis. This information was all contained in the parental consent forms and was clearly explained during individual meetings with all prospective participants during the recruitment phase and prior to the signing of the consent and assent forms.

The seventh risk was the possibility of any staff and/or teachers approaching me and inquiring as to why I was meeting with students at their school. If staff at a school where I was conducting my research had approached me, I would have made it clear that their respective school board has permitted me to enter the school to speak with participants. Should there have been any inquiries from the teacher(s), I would also have mentioned that I am a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and I look out for the best interests of the students as well as colleagues. I was not coming to their respective(s)

workplace with any negative intentions or for any other purpose other than to complete research.

The eighth risk was how I was going to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' involvement. Given the fact that the gatekeepers from both the community centre and school board had either strongly recommended or put provisions in place where I had to be reachable and/or within sight at all times when I was with participants due to their fitting within the vulnerable sector and liability issues that come with the age group, I acknowledged that I could not maintain complete confidentiality of the participants. In addition, all of the participants had self-identified themselves as participants to one another prior to my conducting interviews and all had agreed to office staff and others being able to see them through the glass barriers.

However, I still took measures to not draw attention to participants' involvement in the study and to keep the data collected on each participant confidential. I only interacted with participants in the designated areas provided for my research sites (in the classroom of the community centre or in the office area of the school). I did not meet with any participants outside of these areas within the community centre nor at the school. I scheduled meetings with participants in advance so they would know when to meet with me. If a participants did not to come to the office for our meeting, I would ask one of the two school administrative assistants to check the school attendance to see if the participant were at school that day. If so, I would ask one of them to call the student's classroom or call the student's name over the announcements and ask the student to report to the office, as would be done normally for any other student. If the student were away that day, I would arrange a meeting with the student on a different day and/or meet

with the student during our next scheduled meeting. As for the data that was collected, pseudonyms in the form of initials and more generalized descriptors were used when referencing all parties/participants and institutions in my notes to ensure confidentiality. Furthermore, in the following chapters, I did not include any token physical features, descriptors or information about the participants that would identify a participant out of the group.

The ninth and final risk that was addressed was the possibility of participants disclosing information to me in person or in their journals of any abuse. I understood that there is an ethical duty for a researcher to keep the data collected confidential, but as per my responsibility of being a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and College of Early Childhood Educators, I am legally and morally obligated to report any suspicion of child abuse in my fiduciary capacity with the student.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

As addressed in the preceding chapters, the goal of this research was to capture the essence of the phenomenon of learning EAL for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners by providing participants with the means to share their academic and psychosocial experiences. To accomplish this endeavor, I utilized transcendental phenomenology and closely followed Moustakas' (1994) adaptation of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which was simplified by Creswell (2013). Data was collected through the means of semi-structured interviews, written and/or oral journal responses and reviewing secondary documents offered by the participants.

As I collected data from the participants over a period of four months and contemporaneously coded and analyzed the data using the aforementioned method, twelve themes emerged. I then reviewed these themes and created my separate textural and structural descriptions of what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon at hand, and subsequently created my composite description (the essence of the phenomenon) (Creswell, 2013).

Staying committed to my duty as an ethical researcher, the names of the participants, and the people and schools they referred to have been changed and/or adapted to ensure the confidentiality of the participant and all other parties. Moreover, I chose not to include the grade level of each respective participant nor any other identifying descriptors unique to any participant to avoid the potential of being identified by those who were aware of that individual's participation in the study.

In this chapter, I will highlight the themes that emerged during the data collection process and provide a description of each theme with verbatim examples to allow one to ‘step into the world’ of the participants. Similar statements from multiple participants will not be included due to repetition of content, but unless stated otherwise, it can be assumed that the description for each theme is reflective of that which was offered by the participants overall. However, it is important to note that although the message may have been similar, the intensity of the experiences of each participant relating to the respective theme varied depending on their experiences and/or the information that was disclosed to me. To conclude this chapter, I will provide my composite textural description based on the information that was shared with me to present the essence of the phenomenon at hand.

Themes

Theme 1: Acceptance of teachers and school. At the time of my study, all of the participants were enrolled in programming which Coelho (2007) refers to as EAL resource support programming. Although they had this commonality, the programming that was offered to the individual participants varied greatly based on their particular learning needs and the EAL resources that were offered at their respective schools. Such learning experiences ranged from one participant who spent the majority of the day in the EAL classroom to learn subjects other than gym and art, to other participants who spent the majority of the school day in the mainstream classroom only to be withdrawn from class a few hours per week to have more intensive English programming. It was unanimous that the participants enjoyed the schools that they attended and being with the

teachers who taught them in both the mainstream classroom as well as the EAL classroom.

M.F. disclosed to me that he was transferred to his current school from another school in Southwestern Ontario because he did not have the English abilities to suit the resources available to him. The plan was for him to transfer back to his previous school once he had developed the level of English language competency that would suit the services of his former school. However, after spending more time at his current school, he claims that he no longer wants to return to his former school and explained that if he could do *sahar* (Arabic for magic), he would add “more classes” and make the school “bigger” so that more students could have the experience of going to this school.

Similarly, A.E., during his semi-structured interview said, “I would wish for...the school to be the same [*sic*].” Speaking of his teacher’s presence in the mainstream classroom, N.C. stated “...like, she funny. Like, all us like her. She comes sit beside me and we laugh [*sic*].” He added that his teacher in the mainstream classroom allows them to listen to music while they work in class. It was through these and similar statements that it was apparent that the students felt comfortable with their teachers and their overall perceptions of their respective schools was positive.

Theme 2: Teacher instruction and responsiveness. In order to try to understand the teaching that occurs in the classrooms of the participants, I asked them to bring any secondary sources that they would feel comfortable with sharing and explain that lesson through my interview questions and/or journal entries. Unfortunately, the number of secondary sources indicative of their EAL programming and English class in the mainstream classroom was limited. It was expressed to me by multiple participants that

the resources of which I asked of them are usually kept by their English teachers and do not leave the classroom unless homework is given. As S.B. summed it up, “Always in the class, we don’t take them actually at home. Only when we have homework we take home [*sic*].” Since the majority of the secondary resources which were shared with me during our meetings pertained to other subjects areas, I had to rely almost exclusively on the recollection and the ensuing perspective of the participants when describing their English lessons and the general approach to teaching utilized in both the mainstream classroom as well as the EAL classroom of which they were placed.

In both classroom settings, the participants have had the experience of working independently, in groups and in pairs. When it came to group work, the participants explained that the teacher in the mainstream classroom would determine the groups for activities and make up groups comprising of just ELLs. M.D. was the only participant who indicated that she had had the opportunity to work with one of her English L1 (English as one’s primary language) peers alongside another ELL in a group setting. The group sizes varied depending on the scope and nature of the lesson involved and typically comprised of three to four students. However, all participants, except A.E. who preferred working with a partner, indicated that for the majority of time in the classroom their schoolwork was completed independently and this was the preferred learning style.

The participants provided a generally favourable view of the teaching that occurred in the EAL setting, as well as their mainstream classroom. As part of his EAL programming, A.E. mentioned that he and his classmates learn and use drama, but he was the only participant to speak of this. The other participants mentioned that their English lessons typically comprised of reading and then answering questions about the story they

read to showcase their comprehension through the completion of short answers and multiple-choice questions. This process was captured in M.F.'s description of his daily English lesson:

Yeah like, sometimes, like the teacher give us like, a paper... it's a homework. And like, it's about story, and the answers are with the story. And then, there's the questions that ask what the story is about and there's A and B and C. And then we like circle and there's some writing too [*sic*].

S.B., likewise provided an example of her teacher providing a similar exercise as described by M.F., but also recalled a lesson where the teacher provided S.B. and her ELL peers with vocabulary relating to a certain theme where they had to use the new vocabulary in a sentence:

To teach English, sometimes she gives me a story and I read it and answer questions about it. And if words I don't know, I see them in dictionary... And sentence, she says write in this five, six sentence about the word. Words, like, um, I don't know, sometimes she give me winter words and she say write five on them, but the students are not all at the same level. Some take easy, some not. Sometimes hard, but I'm the betterest one [*sic*].

When asked to clarify what she meant by winter words, S.B. reiterated, "We pick five words and write sentence on them. And we pick these words to write sentence [*sic*]."

The participants also mentioned other activities during English class in the mainstream classroom such as students walking around the classroom and asking their English L1 and ELL peers questions while they write down their responses. A weekly activity that happened every Friday in M.F.'s mainstream classroom involved him and his

peers participating in a spelling competition. The game involved the teacher selecting vocabulary words that the class has studied, reading the word out loud, and having students who are all lined-up, each saying one letter to eventually spell each word. As M.F. explained it:

Mr. H., our teacher, he talks but does not let us see the word. He says, like, spell me the word minute. Like, the first person say M, and the next says I, and it goes like that...but if he didn't say riiiiight, then he lose [*sic*].

M.F. added afterwards that once the spelling competition has only five students left, then these students earn fifty points that can be used towards a prize. In addition, each remaining student is provided with the option of either leaving the competition with the points they have already won, or continuing in the competition to earn additional points, but with the risk of reducing their points, or doubling points if the student decides to spell the whole word correctly. As for teaching and responsiveness to student inquiries in their mainstream classroom, the perspective of the participants as a whole is similar to that of M.D., who provided the following response:

I like my teacher so much, that somebody doesn't know...understand, he teach again. If somebody not study, he teach again. Like, my teacher is not so much angry. Like, if when he teach, don't understand it, he can teach again [*sic*].

M.D.'s perspective of the teacher for her EAL programming was also favourable; however, she explained through example the contrast in the teaching style and/or approach between her EAL teacher and the teacher in her mainstream classroom as set out above:

She let us read at first and, if we don't understand it, he show us how we do it.

And if not understand it, he lefts us to read it. He don't do anything. He just teach.

And after he said, I teach you, now you have to write. He know how to write,

he just says M.D.... write and he can check. Like he let us do everything our self

because we have to learn our self [*sic*]...

and

...Sometimes Miss would give me paper, and something five, five, five times and

write it again and again. And sometimes Miss would give me a ticket and I

would have to write, you know like... and, and like, I had to write, "I like

blank. I like blank"...like I would have to do a sentence about [*sic*].

Similar to M.D.'s experience with more independent learning in EAL programming, R.A. provided a description of an independent activity in the EAL classroom at her school:

Well, like, we read books in free time to get reading better. And the teacher say try

to spell it right, because you're in grade five- you should know... I really want to

read a lot because, first, I learn a lot from the book and my reading get a lot better

[*sic*].

Given the two contrasting approaches to teaching, I asked M.D. if there were any teaching style she preferred, and she provided me with the following answer referring to the mainstream classroom as the "teacher class":

I like my teacher class because us more like, good, because this teacher show us

different way to understand. Like in math, if you don't understand he give you

another thing to know, and... he give you a lot of thing to know [*sic*].

As for R.A., her responses gave me the impression that she believes that success in learning is up to the student- implying that the teaching style of the teacher is not as much of a consideration. As R.A. explains, it is up to the student to watch and listen, “because they tell us what to do... and like... if you listen to the teacher, you will know everything. Just that you have to read it and solve the questions... yeah [*sic*].”

Theme 3: EAL programming generally seen as being too easy. While I was collecting data from participants, it was my intent to understand their perspectives regarding the level of difficulty of work that they were completing in the EAL classroom and in the mainstream classroom setting. The responses to this inquiry ranged from easy to difficult and on to challenging, or a combination thereof when referring to the mainstream classroom. However, the consensus was that the participants’ felt the EAL programming was becoming too easy for them. According to N.C., “everyone laughs” in his EAL class and they say, “This is easy, this is easy!” On a similar note, A.H. shared that he prefers to go to his EAL class because the work is easy for him. He made his point very clear when he stated, “The work miss gave me was easy...write eighteen sentence. The words are easy [*sic*].”

When I met with A.H. on a different day, he showed me an example of work he had been working on in class and had been asked to take home for homework (as seen in Figure 3). He explained to me that the assignment involved him tracing consonants on the worksheet and then colouring the pictures that began with the appropriate consonant. He chose to also spell the words as an additional step for extra practice.

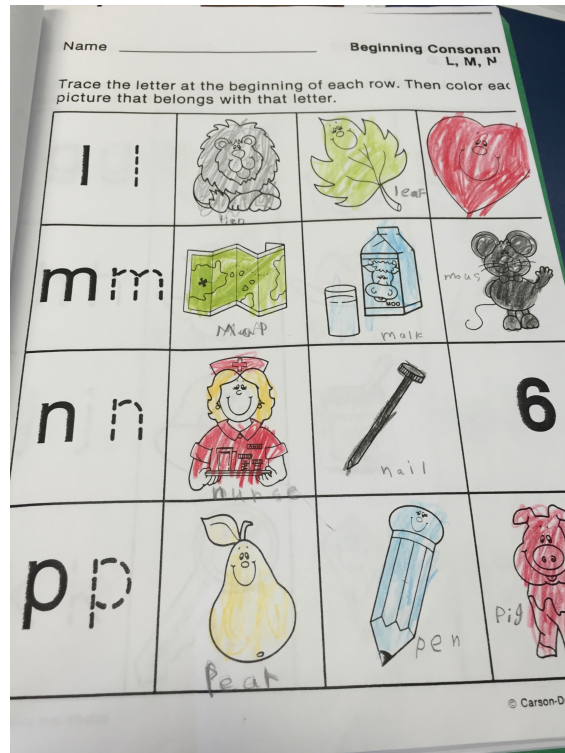


Figure 3. A Page of Schoolwork Given to A.H. in his EAL Classroom.

Similar to the work that is presented above, A.H. shared other work (see Figure 4) that he had been given in class which involved him circling pictures on the right-hand side of the page that have the same consonant blend (two consonants that form a single sound) as the picture on the left.

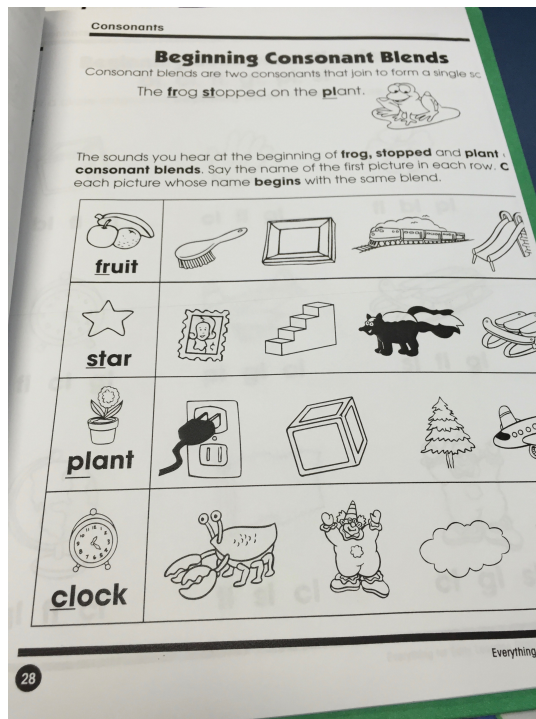


Figure 4. Another Page of Schoolwork Given to A.H. in his EAL Classroom.

R.A., who is in the same grade as A.H., confirmed that the schoolwork she had been completing in class had become “easy” for her as well. The example she provided was of an exercise where she and her L1 peers in the EAL class opened their workbooks and read sentences; crossed out the ones that were not capitalized correctly or do not have the correct punctuation at the end of the sentence; and then wrote the sentence inside the workbook as a rough copy. Once the sentences were reviewed, she wrote the good copy in her word study book (See Figure 5). When reviewing her work, the teacher gave only checkmarks, did not acknowledge any errors and just wrote ‘Good!’ at the end of the exercise (See Figure 6).

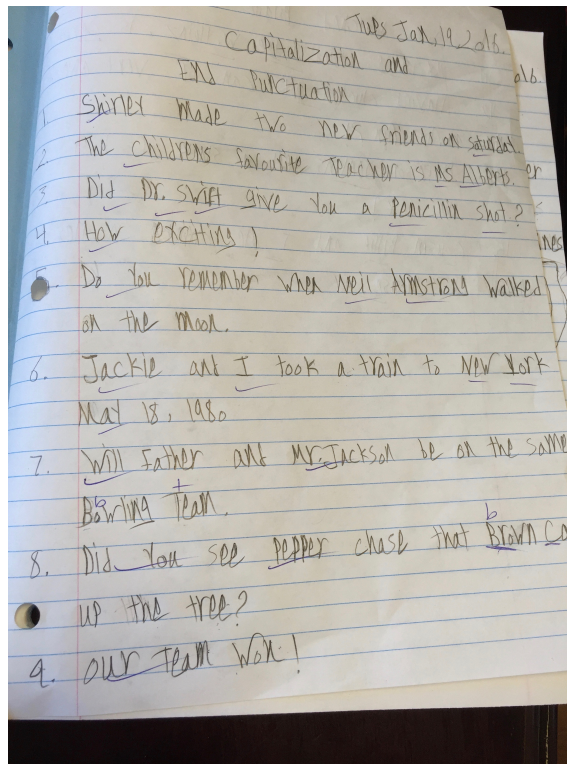


Figure 5. First Page of R.A.'s Schoolwork in the EAL Classroom.

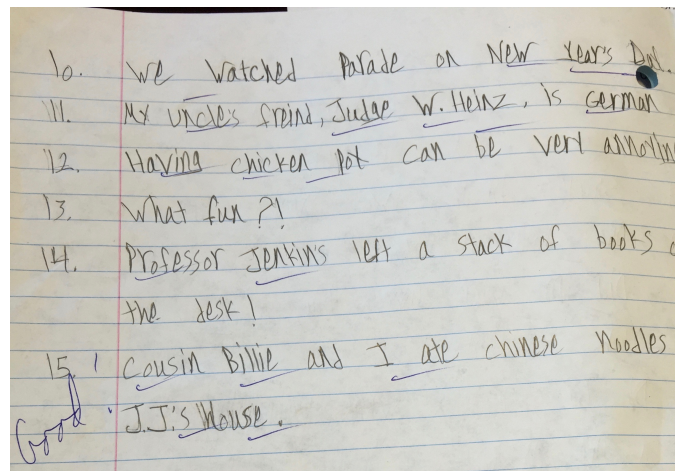


Figure 6: Second Page of R.A.'s Schoolwork in the EAL Classroom.

However, despite R.A. having claimed that the work was easy, she later spoke of obstacles: “It’s easy... but there’s words in Arabic that do not translate to English. You have to think of five or four words for one word...ten words I can say, in five words I say in Arabic [sic].” S.B. stated that the lessons in her EAL class could sometimes be a little

difficult at first due to the new terminology and the initial struggle of mixing up words with others based on the teacher's pronunciation. S.B. recalled her experience of sitting in her desk, looking up at her classroom's ceiling and counting the ceiling tiles because she heard her teacher say, "Find five boxes" instead of "Find five bucks." However, once it became more clear to her as to what the teacher wanted, it became much easier for her: "Umm, sometimes, when I don't understand the lesson, it's very hard. When I understand it, it's easy. But first time I listen I don't understand anything...and then I 'stand [*sic*]."

On a related note, a few of the participants expressed some concern over the perceived difficulty of work assigned to them as compared with their L1 peers. M.D. acknowledged that not only was the work she was completing in her EAL classroom becoming too easy for her, but also addressed the difference in the work that she and the other ELLs receive in their homeroom classroom: "We're all different in ESL. When Miss gives us stuff, we get different stuff because we are not that good [*sic*]."

R.A. confirmed the same practice at her school: "Like, I'm in ESL... they don't give me, like, the really hard stuff...but like, some stuff is different from others [*sic*]." She then continued to explain that her teacher in the EAL classroom advised her that she is required to complete schoolwork for the younger grades because that was the level she was at:

I do word study in ESL and I do it in grade five. And I do language in ESL and all the other one because my teacher told me I have to study, like, at your level...Like, I'm in grade five. In ESL they give me grade four or three, so...I do three or four, and I do my level. Like, they give me stuff for grade three or four. It depends on how you are doing [*sic*].

Due to the lack of student in-class work that was shared with me and the fact I was not provided any documentation indicating any assessment, the level of academic performance of these students is unknown. However, given the fact that the aforementioned students attend one of three different schools, two of which belong to one school board and one that belongs to another, the overlap in the responses of the students shows that there are apparent trends in the overall EAL programming.

Theme 4: Lack of focus on country and culture. Based on the perspectives of the participants, it became apparent that they and their classmates were of the understanding that there was a lack of reference to their respective cultures and to their country of origin in lessons and in school culture in general. According to the participants, nothing relating to their culture, such as but not limited to, music, TV shows, pop culture, cuisine, literature, etc. has been incorporated into lessons in either the mainstream classroom or the EAL classroom. Moreover, the participants confirmed that neither their homeroom teacher nor their mainstream classroom teacher have provided them with the opportunity to educate their peers about their culture nor the country they come from. As I got to know the participants and their interests, I asked each of them if they had had the opportunity to read a book relating to their interests or about their culture and/or country of origin, which would they prefer to read. All of the participants, besides two, stated that they would like to learn more about their culture and/or country of origin. For example, R.A. would like to share in the learning about her former country and culture with her classmates because:

I get out of Iraq when I was in grade one and I want to learn more because that is my country and I feel that I will be happy and so excited to learn more and more about my country and everything in my country [*sic*].

R.A. then added, “I should know about it...most people know their culture. I want to know about mine too [*sic*].” Similarly, S.B. expressed that she wanted her English L1 peers to learn about her culture because she would like to her peers to know “what [she] do [*sic*]” and “why [she] does it [*sic*]”, such as wearing her hijab and why she is not allowed to touch boys. A.G. said he would like to know more as he would like to learn more about “my Syria.” Whereas C.I. wanted to learn about her country and culture because she wanted to fill in the blanks after she and her family left behind her friends and extended family in Iraq: “I want to know what happened.”

M.D., originally from Iraq, moved with her family to Syria and lived there for six years prior to coming to Canada. As such, her homeroom teacher taught her mainstream classroom peers about Syria. M.D. shared the following information about this experience: “Sometimes we go to class and they teach us about Syria people and they give me Arabic paper. I read it for my friend. And it tell me how in Syria they are dying [*sic*].”

Asked whether she would like to continue to read about her former home country, M.D. said no and explained,

Because, it would be a little bit scary because all the book would talk about would be some people die because I saw so much book about people dying. As like for my dad, and we would, could make about Syria because it would all be

about killing and I would not want to see. And would be something I would not read again [*sic*].

M.D. finished up this segment of the interview by stating that she would still like to learn about her home country Iraq in school and believes that her peers should learn about it as well, but for now, she would prefer to read about “silly things” like cartoons instead of Syria.

Despite the absence of R.A.’s specific culture being incorporated into classroom lessons, she acknowledged that there were lessons relating to other cultures in the mainstream classroom, “Well...like, in the regular class, we learn about the first nation and their culture [*sic*].” She also added that she and her peers have had the opportunity to learn more about French Canadian culture as well, and they got to try crêpes and learn about Carnaval de Québec during an annual school celebration.

A.E. was the only participant who expressed that he had little interest in learning about his culture and country in the classroom. However, he expressed that he wished that there were books about his culture and country of origin at his school for him to read. A.E. stated that he is fine with just learning about Canadian culture and then provided me with his succinct reasoning as to why the teaching of his country of origin nor his culture would be of importance to him: “We’re in Canada. That’s why there’s book about Canada [*sic*].”

In addition to learning about their respective cultures or country of origin at school, I also asked the participants if there were any resources and/or literature that related to their culture or country of origin. All of the participants confirmed that they had not seen the aforementioned in their mainstream classroom or in the library. However,

S.B. and R.A. advised me that there were some books that are translated into standard Arabic in their school's library, but the content did not relate to their culture nor their country of origin. One example that came to mind for S.B. was a book translated into Arabic about desert animals.

Theme 5: An attachment to country of origin. The participants expressed their gratitude for living in Canada. The reasons for feeling so grateful varied from participant to participant. Responses included, but were not limited to, feeling safe; not having to experience the corporal punishment as they did at their old schools; and the teaching in Canada is a lot more fun than what they were used to. However, a reoccurring theme amongst the participants was a sense of connectedness to the countries from which they and their families originated from and the pride they took in their cultural heritage. They still listened to music and watched TV programming from their country of origin; they spoke their primary languages at home; and they and their families still followed their respective religious beliefs.

In many cases this connection was very intense. For example, R.A. claimed that she loved Iraq "more than [her] life" because of the positive memories of being home in her country, such as going to her uncle's house that was right near her old school and watching a TV program which cheered her up: "Yeah, you know Unicomedia? I like the Iraqi comedia because it make me die laughing from it. It's so like fun... And I watch TV show in Iraqi and English [*sic*]." When explaining why she spoke Arabic and watched Arabic programming, she stated, "It's my language and I don't want to forgot my language." Similarly, C.I. stated the following, "If I watch Arabic, I won't forget the Arabic...and English too [*sic*]."

Not only was there a sense of pride in their culture and language, but there was also a sense of responsibility amongst a few of the participants to retain their primary language because they see the practicality of remaining competent in their primary language. M.D. and A.E. provided a few examples on point.

M.D. felt that she could help the people back home, “Because maybe when I get older, I want to return back to Iraq and teach their people Arabic [*sic*].” As for A.E., he enthusiastically responded to the inquiry by declaring, “Yeah, I don’t want to forget...If I visit Gaga, and I don’t know how to speak Masalit or Arabic, I can’t talk to friends and family [*sic*]”

Theme 6: EAL classroom viewed as a limitation. Another theme that emerged during the data collection period amongst the older participants from two of the three schools was that placement in the EAL classroom was viewed as more of a limitation as opposed to presenting much needed programming to lead to future success. The participants looked forward to the opportunity of leaving their EAL classrooms and returning to the mainstream classroom fulltime as they were aware that their options may be limited if they stayed. S.B. provided her rationale as to why she would like to leave the EAL classroom at her school:

Ummm...I want to go...because in ESL I have to go to ESL class in high school. I want to pick a high school anywhere I want...and any high school I want to go. In high school they have ESL class and I want...I want any high school I want. Like in ESL, they say I have to go to a high school that has ESL. You can’t... Anywhere, I want to go. I want to go to Governor High School, and they say I can’t go because of ESL. And I say, nooo...I want to go! But I can get out if

I know English a lot [*sic*].

Further supporting this perspective, N.C. shared a similar opinion of his EAL programming, but based his reasoning more on the social aspect as opposed to the lack of choice that S.B. expressed above. When I asked him why he wanted to be in his mainstream classroom fulltime, he replied by stating that the EAL classroom he goes to is comprised of younger students and his sister, and that his friends graduated from his school last year. He continued to explain, “Because, like, if I go there, I go to high school...where I want to go. High school I want to go... All my friends there. Yeah, like, and I go the same school... to high school” [*sic*].

R.A., on the other hand, presented yet another rationale for “get[t]ing out of ESL” and into full-time mainstream programming because as she viewed the EAL classroom as a roadblock to achieving her goal of becoming a doctor.

Theme 7: Establishing a sense of belonging. The subject matter of friendships and/or relationships with peers emerged in every conversation I had with the participants. The participants not only provided me the opportunity to vicariously experience the academic side of school, but I also got to experience school from their psychosocial perspective as well. The participants explained to me that they spoke with both their classmates in the mainstream classroom as well as their ELL classmates in their EAL classroom, and they have managed to create a sense of belonging amongst their peers at school based on what they have common with each other. For the male participants, it was about meeting people with commonalities such as cultural background prior to school commencing and their involvement in sports that brought them together with their English L1 and ELL peers as they showcased their athletic abilities. As for the girls, their

sense of belonging with their peers appeared to be more closely linked with and/or established through a shared cultural background, simply being in the same EAL classroom as their peers, or taking on a leadership/nurturing role with younger students at their respective school.

For example, N.C. took pride in himself for his athletic abilities, especially when it came to soccer. He not only claimed that he is his own favourite soccer player, but according to him, “Like, I know everyone, and like, everyone know me... like... M.J. is first and I am second... and then come everyone else [*sic*].” He was of the belief that his athletic abilities have afforded him with respect at his school with not only with his peers, but also with students older than him. Although the majority of his friends have since graduated and moved on to high school, he still had his core of three close friends, two of whom were from Nepal and one from Macedonia. In addition to the friends he has made through sports, he also informed me of a friend he made prior to even beginning school. He was at his local Arabic community centre and met a boy who, to his delight, was also set to attend the school he was going to attend. They remain friends and now ride the school bus together.

Similar to N.C., A.G. claimed that he too is one of the better soccer players at school and he played with friends, who can speak both Arabic and English, during recess time. A.E. and M.F. both connected and have continued to play with their respective friends through sports such as soccer, basketball and track and field. Likewise, A.H. advised me that he had met friends before he entered the school system and has enjoyed being with those friends and doing things together such as sports, “Because I like to run with my friends. When they run, I run with them [*sic*].” The friends of the

aforementioned participants can speak both Arabic and English, and they claim that they have the same number of friends in their EAL classroom as in the mainstream classroom, but have made no reference to these friends outside the context of playing sports.

As for the girls, M.D. met a girl in her neighbourhood whom she befriended before the school year began. M.D.'s friend spoke Arabic, attended her school and was also engaged in EAL programming. During recess, she stated that the two of them would go to the kindergarten class to, "help kids and we play with them." She explained to me that she enjoyed her time working with these younger students and brought them to the office when they were upset. When I asked M.D. about any other friends, she did not mention any others during the entire three months of our interviews.

R.A. and S.B. advised me that the friends they spend most of the time at school with were their Arabic speaking friends who were in their EAL classrooms. Although they enjoyed going home for lunch or eating in the mainstream classroom, they enjoyed their indoor recesses more, primarily in the music room, or with their friends from the EAL classroom. Lastly, C.I., similar to the rest of the female participants, primarily played with her friends whom were in her EAL class. However, unlike herself, her friends originated from Macedonia, Nepal, Iraq and Korea. While completing her journal entries, C.I. she said that her EAL teacher "told the class that we have to play with everybody... so today was great day [*sic*]."

During the second interview, an issue which emerged in discussion with the participants was the matter of being introduced to and/or be made to feel welcome by their English L1 peers and to have them feel a part of their new classroom/school community. An interesting finding was that all of the participants claimed that their EAL

teachers introduced them to their EAL peers on the first day; however, in contrast, all but one participant claimed that their homeroom teachers did not introduce them to their English L1 peers when they first arrived at their school.

Theme 8: Language competency helps make one happier. As indicated in Chapter 3, all of the participants had been enrolled in a Southwestern Ontario publicly funded school for at least one year. To gain an understanding of the how their school experience began and discover how their experience has been since then, I asked each participant to reflect on his or her initial days at his or her respective school and share which year(s) of school he or she preferred most and why. It became apparent very quickly that the majority of them had a difficult time in the initial transition into their new school environment and/or they preferred the latter year(s) of school.

R.A. provided the most detailed response for her arrival in Canada:

So sick...I was sick because I was not used to airplane...Syria was hot, Lebanon was windy, the capital of Germany was raining...and Toronto was a little bit cold. So I get sick... But I saw good people who help us at translating... and the first day we went to the stores to buy clothes, food...most of them were Arabic [*sic*].

R.A. then proceeded to explain what it was like for her at her new school in Southwestern Ontario, when she stated, “Everybody was happy. Everyone welcomed me. In ESL, where there are Arabic friends where I can talk to them...I can understand them more...I did like it, but it was a little bit noisy [*sic*].” However, when I asked her about when she became comfortable, she provided me with the following response:

The middle of the year. Well not the middle...the third month...because I was feeling lonely. Though I had Arabic friends, I didn’t walk with them that much at

recess. I was still remember I was feeling so lonely as recesses and like...and even sometimes I want to cry. I wish I could go back to Iraq and see my family [sic] .

She then continued to elaborate on which year of school she preferred the most and she provided me with the following response about her English L1 peers:

Three [years ago], I didn't like and I will never like it. Because everyone was mean and sometimes they get me in trouble because I don't know English.

So...they say bad words. I didn't know it's bad words but then like when I know English, I know they were talking bad words I find. Because I didn't know what they were saying. Sooo...I didn't really understand them, so I would just sit in and when I learn English more and more some, I remember they say bad words like I'm stupid...she don't know...why she... why...why she so weird?...

Yeah, it's like that [sic].

Although the following comment was used in the context of a different topic R.A. shared with me relating to a crisis in her life, it appeared she has adopted a defeated or realist mindset (depending on how one interprets this) relating to situations that upset her:

Well, I'm sad, but...it's how the life is. If I get sad or cry, then what's going to happen? It's still the same... (inhales).When I was small I learned like that. If you cry, what's going to happen? Nothing. You can't change the past... I learned like that [sic].

Similar to R.A.'s experiences with her English L1 peers in her mainstream classroom were those of S.B. and M.D. S.B. wished for the following, with her becoming flustered midway through her response:

Umm... actually, I want to meet English friends, but like, English friends, like, don't be friendly because my English, like, my talking, like... (paused). When I come, a boy tell me I like a baby because I don't 'stand English and they laugh on me [*sic*].

As for M.D., she referred to her first few days as “not good” because “I was kind of scared. I did not want to be in different class of my friend. And I was scare[d] of language [*sic*].” During her first few days at school, she struggled with making friends: “Nobody talk to me. They leave me alone [*sic*].” When asked if she had one wish, she provided the following response:

What change? Would be some people not say bad word and no people draw on hand... Yeah, and let some people play with'em. Can play, like... this girl don't have ball and don't know how to speak English, let her play with you guys... like this [*sic*].

When A.G. was asked if he could provide some advice to a new student to his school, he responded with the following, referring to “they” as his classmates in his mainstream classroom, “Don't push anyone, no fighting...if they say bad words to you, go to the office...I'll play with you [*sic*].” It took A.G. until the second day of school to feel comfortable since the students in his EAL classroom befriended him; meanwhile, it took A.H. seven months to adjust to his new school setting. He attributed this to having increased his communicative competence in English: “I don't have friend, because I don't know how to speak English. When I learn English, I can talk to friends [*sic*].”

In contrast, language competency in Arabic as opposed to English, provided M.F. with a different experience from the outset: “I felt great because I had a great teacher and

he spoke Arabic...just like Mr. K” (the name of his vice principal). Given that M.F.’s school had a large Arabic speaking population, M.F. was able to communicate with students who also spoke Arabic and was able to initiate friendships; thus, allowing him to feel comfortable in his new school “at the beginning”.

A.E. was the anomaly from the group where language, or lack thereof, did not necessarily play a significant role in his happiness, as his primary language was not widely spoken at his school. He explained to me that he enjoyed his first day at school because he “had gym” and enjoyed “running and playing” with his classmates. Moreover, the administrators at the school provided him with an abundance of supplies before he began school: “They gave me a backpack, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, scissors, glue and rulers [*sic*].”

Theme 9: Concerns about aggression. Over the course of the data collection period, it became apparent that most of the participants helped out their fellow classmates in the EAL classroom. In fact, many of the participants claimed to have served and/or are still serving as interpreters, translators or a resource during class time for other ELLs who were new to Canada and/or have been assessed as having a lower level of English language competency. During the second semi-structure interview with the participants, I asked them if they had any advice for new ELLs such as the Syrian refugees who were beginning school. Most of the participants mentioned that in addition to remembering rules such as not yelling in class, listening and not being mean to the teacher, and asking the teacher when they had any questions, they all mentioned that they would tell them that they (the participants) were there to help them and be their friend. However, what appeared to be a common sentiment amongst four participants, who by chance represent

all three schools, was that it was difficult for them to be helpful to the new refugee students from Syria because of the behavior exhibited by the new students towards them. There appeared to be a great deal of unsolicited anger and aggression arising from frustration and hurt.

N.C. claimed that the two new Syrian refugee girls in his EAL classroom wanted to fight his sister and he has had to defend her against them in the EAL classroom. He explained, “My teacher say no one talk bad words...and they say you crazy, you stupid, you no listening [*sic*].” Similarly, A.H. stated, “Sometimes they want to fight me. Because me and my friends was talking a lot and they say stop talking, stop talking. When we tell them stop talking, they say no [*sic*]!” M.D. tried to serve as an interpreter for a Syrian refugee boy in her class at her school, but claims that he was really mean to her and she didn’t want to talk to him anymore. Although it appears that there may be some resentment between ELLs and the new group of Syrian refugees, R.A. did not feel the Syrian refugees were solely at fault. She suggested that the male ELLs from Iraq in her class might also be responsible when she described the EAL classroom setting that she endures on a daily basis:

Umm...fighting...with like...boys against boys...Mr. K [the vice principal], all day, come in and coming and going, coming and going... They have a lot of problem. They come in... they come in from some places where ‘we can fight, we can do that’. All the people in Iraq fight and saw a new rules. Like, we have to do that. Like some rules in Canada they don’t have in Iraq [*sic*].

Similarly, S.B. confirmed yet another example of this inner fighting and looked at this ongoing problem in her EAL classroom as an “everyday problem. It can’t be fixed.”

Theme 10: The lack of English usage in the EAL classroom. Another theme that emerged from participant responses was their frustration with the on-going use of their first language in the EAL room. The only time that English is spoken for the entire time is when the participants are in their respective mainstream classrooms. The majority of the participants stated that they spoke their first language during recess and on the bus; meanwhile, they unanimously confirmed in their semi-structured interviews that they and their peers all spoke Arabic at some point in time when they were in their EAL classroom. However, according to the participants, they claimed to only use Arabic in the EAL classroom when they were assisting a friend in class with interpreting and/or translating; however, they claimed the other students in the EAL class used Arabic a lot more frequently. According to A.H., “If they speak English, I speak English...If they speak Arabic, I speak to them Arabic [*sic*].”

Having found out this information, I asked the participants where and with whom they believed they learned English best; thus, leading to my asking if they believed it is effective. M.F., C.I., and A.G. claimed they learned English best from their friends, EAL teacher and homeroom teacher. M.D. claimed that certain people teach each language component best: “For my speaking, my friends because speak with my friends more. About reading... with my English teacher. And writing, with my grade five, six teacher.” A.H. believed that he learned English best from his teacher because, “She teach me... like, she help me everyday [*sic*].”

However, A.E., R.A., and S.B. claimed that they learned best when they were in homeroom class with their homeroom teacher and English L1 peers because they were immersed in an English-speaking environment and benefited from listening and

interacting solely in English. As A.E. put it, “I learn English with people talking. And I listen, and I learn [*sic*].” According to R.A., “The most I learn English is in home class because in ESL they speak Arabic all the time... I listen to the teacher and I talk to my friends and students in the class [*sic*].” R.A. proceeded to suggest that if she were the teacher she would not allow friends in EAL to sit with each other because they talked too much; nor would her peers in her EAL classroom be allowed to speak Arabic. Similarly, S.B. had the following opinion of her EAL classroom where Arabic is spoken quite often:

When I first found a friend, I found my class, my teachers in ESL all spoke to me, but it was hard...because it was all Arabic. I won't learn English if its all Arabic. My parents says that too...I know, it's hard to learn English because it's all Arabic, Arabic, Arabic, Arabic, Arabic... [*sic*].

Theme 11: Math & French- An even playing field. Although English was the primary focus for academics for this study and I tried to focus the data collection process on this subject area exclusively, the semi-structured interviews, the journaling sessions, and the secondary sources which were shared tended to ‘drift’ into discussions relating to two other subject areas: (1) mathematics and (2) French. With the Ontario Ministry of Education’s focus on improving the province’s mathematics scores, a considerable amount of time has been allotted (roughly five hours per week depending on the school board) to teaching math. Consequently math has become a significant component of the learning experience for the ELLs (Urback, 2016). Given the fact that Canada’s two official languages are English and French, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2013a) expects all students, including ELLs, to learn French. In line with the Ministry’s expectation, all of the participants were taking French at their respective schools. What

emerged from the data collected was that the majority of the participants (A.H. excluded) shared a common interest in mathematics and French, and in some instances these two subject areas placed the participants at an advantage over their English L1 peers. The statement that summarized the opinions of the majority of the participants best was that of S.B., who claimed the following about her experience in the mainstream classroom alongside her English L1 peers:

Yes, I love studying French and math because math just numbers, like, don't use words. And French, all the class the same because all class know French like me. Yeah, and in the report card I get in French and math good... Yes, and I stay and then when they get math, French, and all that kind of stuff I always in regular class [*sic*].

S.B., M.D., A.G., and C.I. stated that math was one of their favourite subject areas because of their teachers' receptiveness to their inquiries while in class and as M.D. indicated previously, the teacher was able to provide them with different approaches to learning. S.B. had similar feelings towards her mainstream classroom teacher at her school:

In math, there is a word problem, like math and words problem, sometimes I see and I don't understand. So I leave to next day, and the next day you say you have problems, and I say he tell how we do the question and the answer [*sic*].

The opportunity to work on mathematics has even become a reward that S.B.'s teacher uses to encourage S.B. in her mainstream classroom: "Ms. P., she says when we finish to go to Ms. V.'s class and I finish it, I go tell my Mister and he tell me just go study math, 'kay, and be happy [*sic*]."

French, as well as English, were A.E.'s favourites classes. He claimed that he "like[s] to learn a lot of words" and then have the ability to communicate with more people. Meanwhile, R.A. enjoyed French class because the people in Quebec speak French and she would like to bring her family to Quebec so that she can communicate with them. Moreover, she also enjoyed the incentives in French class for the work she did, which she did not receive in English class. For example, R.A. and her classmates in the mainstream classroom were learning the verb 'to be' in French (as seen in Figure 7). They would receive a stamp for each answer they provided and then received a candy if they got a row of stamps (as seen in Figure 8). If they filled more than half a page with stamps, they received two candies.

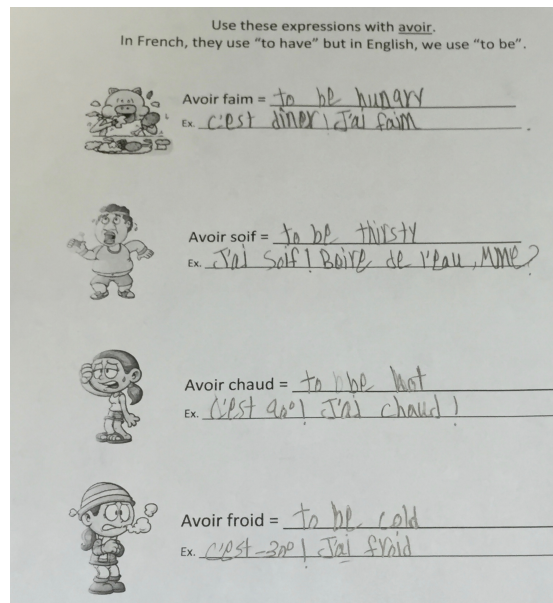


Figure 7. An Activity R.A. Completed in her French Class.

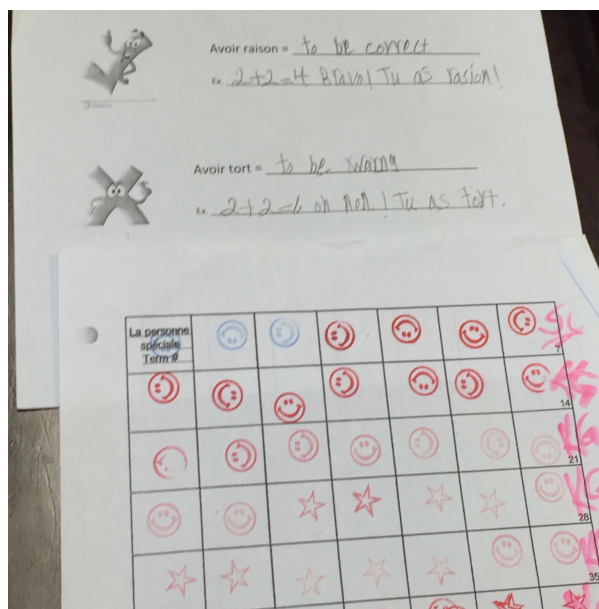


Figure 8. The Backside of the Activity and the Stamp Sheet.

Lastly, M.D. claimed that she enjoyed French class because of the musical component that is incorporated into the lessons as she got to sing French songs together with her English L1 peers.

Theme 12: More parent-teacher communication/ parental involvement. The final theme that emerged during the data collection process involved communication between the teachers and the parents of the participants. During the final semi-structured interviews with the participants, two important points were revealed: (a) all of the participants agreed that ongoing communication is important; and (b) all but one of the participants believed that their parents and teachers should communicate more.

A.H. knows it no secret that “[He] talks too much in class” and that “Miss, on the report card, gave [him] S,...G and E are better [*sic*].” Although S.B. did not want her parents to know if she did “bad” or “poorly” on a test, she as well as the other participants understood that their parents needed to be kept informed. Despite the fact that the participants were nervous when their parents spoke with their teachers, the participants all

wanted their parents to know how they were doing in school and to make inquiries as to how their child could do better. M.F., the sole participant who did not think his parents and teachers needed to communicate more, mentioned that his parents were advised on his report card that they did not need to meet with his teachers. Therefore, as he put it, “They don’t have anything to talk about.” However, in contrast, R.A. felt otherwise:

I think it’s ok, because like I’m nervous when someone talk on me... about me... I get nervous on what they talk about, what they saying about me, so... I get very nervous and very frustrated. But sometimes... sometimes...sometimes... sometimes...I really, really want them to meet [*sic*].”

R.A. did however mention her mom had had one occasion to speak with her teacher as R.A. had missed the bus one morning. Other than that, there had been no other communication. None of the participants’ planners that were shared had any written correspondence between the teacher and the parents of the participants. However, C.I. advised me that her teachers do check her tests to see if her parents have signed them or not, and they write in her planner to remind her to show her teachers her test. Otherwise, there is no other contact between the two. She also mentioned that on one occasion her father asked her to write a note to one of her teachers and post it on her homework (as seen in Figure 9) to advise her teacher that she had completed her homework with her father’s assistance. Looking at the note, C.I. said, “I wrote this on Sunday...I do my homework with my dad [*sic*].” C.I. then said that when the teacher saw the note, her teacher said nothing.



Figure 9. C.I.'s Note from her Father to her Teacher.

As for parental assistance with homework in the home, many of the participants indicated that their parents helped them with their homework if they understood English and/or were not working. Some participants shared that in the alternative they would receive help from older siblings. As for parental involvement at the school, R.A. was the only participant to provide an example. She claimed that only once had her mother gone to the school and that she had gone for an assembly on a Friday because that was the only convenient day for her. Despite the expressed desire for increased parent-teacher communications, none of the participants happened to mention any formal attempts that had been made by the teachers to reach out to their parents nor did the participants make any suggestions.

The Essence of the Phenomenon at Hand

Committed to Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological procedures that have been adapted and outlined by Creswell (2013), I will now provide the following composite description (the essence) of the experience of learning English as an additional language for junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario reflective of my findings.

At some point in time over the course of the past three years, the parents of the participants had made the decision to move to Canada with little or no explanation and/or

consultation with their young children. The participants in this study had to leave their extended family and friends behind in their respective countries to seek a safer and/or better life. For many families of the participants, this was not the first time this difficult decision had been made, as they had thought the country they had moved to for refuge was going to be their home until their eventual return back to their country of origin. However, turmoil followed these families and there was no going back. These families, as well as the families of other refugees, had to move to a land much further from home with the hope that they would escape their problems once and for all. Once the participants and their families landed in Toronto or Montreal, they were then directed to Southwestern Ontario. After getting situated in their new homes, the participants began school, and some, had to move again to a yet another school because of lack of English language competency.

The first day at the new school was exciting for some- especially for those who had made a friend prior to beginning school. However, the majority of participants were nervous because it was all new to them and they had a difficult time not thinking about their friends and family back at home. When they were introduced to their peers in the EAL classroom, it came as a surprise as to how many students, and even teaching staff, were similar to the majority of them when it came to language and religion, but what the students all had in common was that English was not their primary language. The schoolwork typically involved reading writing and colouring, and they tended to work independently. They spent the remainder of the day in the mainstream classroom with their peers whose primary language was English and/or had a high level of English-language competency. However, in the mainstream classroom things were somewhat

different. They were not introduced to their peers and they came to realize that most of the work assigned to them was different from that of their peers. In addition, they tended to be grouped together with the students they spent their time with in the EAL classroom as opposed to being mixed in with their English L1 peers.

After a couple of days, most of the participants made at least one friend in the EAL classroom, but had difficulty making friends with their peers in the mainstream classroom. Students in the mainstream classroom, outside of class time, called the ELLs inappropriate names relating to the way they spoke and where they came from and, on the most part, chose not to play with them. However, there were some successes with the male participants who were able to utilize their athletic abilities to earn the respect of their English L1 peers in the mainstream classroom and their L2 peers in the EAL classroom. Unfortunately, socializing with English L1 peers was much more difficult for the girls so they resorted to speaking mostly with their classmates from the EAL classroom. One participant shared that for the longest time, she and a friend had spent the bulk of their free time at school helping the kindergarten students. She found this rewarding as the younger children appreciated the attention and assistance they received. Every one of the participants shared the same goal when it came to their social lives at school- to learn English so they could make friends.

As time went on the participants reported feeling more comfortable with their new environment because they had developed relationships with more students at their school; they were enjoying the lessons on their new country's culture; and some felt the satisfaction of having the upper hand over many of their mainstream classroom peers as their understanding of French and math was comparable, if not better. However, there

was something that they could not seem to forget- the country and culture from where they originally came from. Although they were interested in learning about Canadian culture as well as that of the First Nations, the majority of the participants wished that they and their classmates in both classroom settings could have also learned about the culture from which they come from. At the very least, they would have liked to have had some books that spoke of their culture so that their peers could learn more than what is shared in the media about their war-torn countries of origin. They believed that their respective cultures were part of their identity and some of the participants would like to eventually return to their countries of origin as a visitor or a teacher, but first, they had to set the trajectory of their lives through the attainment of English language competency. This was especially important for those older participants who were well aware that if they did not get out of the EAL classroom soon, they would not have a choice as to which high school they would be permitted to attend.

Learning English as an additional language did not come without its challenges in the current learning environments of the participants. The programming that they were receiving was beginning to feel too easy for them since both the content and learning materials more closely resembled that given to much younger students. They wanted to get started on the more difficult work to prove that they were ready to be in the mainstream classroom fulltime.

It appeared that the parents of the participants and the respective teachers did not seem to communicate as much as the majority of the participants would have liked to have seen. They would have liked to have seen more than just a report card sent home, because they wanted their parents to know more about how they were doing in school and

what could be done to assist them in reaching their goal of leaving the confines of the EAL classroom and/or programming.

It was difficult to learn English in the EAL classroom because their peers spoke Arabic to both socialize as well as rely on for on-going interpretation from English to Arabic of what the teacher had said. The participants appeared to not mind providing assistance to those weaker students because they knew what it was like when they first arrived; however, of recent, their kindness was being put to the test. Any help provided to the new refugee students at their respective schools most often ended in verbal and/or physical conflict requiring on-going intervention from the teacher and/or the vice principal.

Although all of the participants were happy with their teachers and the schools they attended, and had people in their lives they could refer to as friends, it became apparent over the four months of data collection that their academic and psychosocial experiences in school were different from their English L1 peers who were exclusively in the mainstream classroom and that of another ELL who was enrolled in the EAL classroom the entire time. The participants were experiencing both the mainstream and the EAL learning environments on a daily basis and, as such, were in the position to compare and contrast the two settings; the lessons being offered; and the relationships they have had with peers in each class. Two unanimous findings were for certain: (1) language was powerful and (2) the process of learning English as an additional language for junior-level English language learners was a complex one. The level of English language competency of the participants had affected their school experiences up to this point in multiple ways and based on their perceptions, the sooner they could develop the

requisite English language competency skills and make the necessary cultural adjustments required to move into the mainstream classroom full-time, the sooner they would be on a more level playing field to build new relationships and meet with academic success.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The focus of this study was to understand the learning experiences of junior-level (Grades 4-6) ELLs currently enrolled in EAL programs in three Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools. While I prepared for this study, I was of the belief that listening to the personal learning experiences and/or reviewing the documents of current junior-level ELLs in Ontario fitting within this specific age group would allow me to capture the essence of the phenomenon at hand; serve as starting point in addressing any contributing factors leading to the apparent disconnect between the intended successes of current Ministry guidelines/programming and the actual achievement level of junior-level ELLs; and lastly, contribute to a field of research on the perspectives of junior-level/elementary school ELLs that appears to be lacking depth and relatively sparse. Using the findings of my literature review and the data collected for research study, it was my goal to address the research question which served as the cornerstone of my study: *“How does the educational experience of junior-level English Language Learners (ELLs), currently registered in EAL resource support programs in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools, relate to ELL’s achievement of short and long term academic success and psychosocial wellbeing?”*

Through the adoption of transcendental phenomenology, I had the opportunity of personally bracketing myself prior to conducting the study to minimize any biases I had relating to the phenomenon of which I was interested in studying, and then vicariously living the lives of nine ELLs at their school through multiple methods of data collection to indirectly address my research question and its related sub-questions through my

findings. Given the data obtained and the supporting literature found in the systematic literature review, the findings in this study indicated that although the participants were content with the services they received, there was room for improvement in enhancing the academic and psychosocial experiences of Ontario junior-level ELLs.

Within the remaining sections I will highlight the thematic overlaps in my findings and with those found through my review of literature both within and beyond the confines of my particular study; indicate how my findings relate to theories of effective practices for teaching and successfully integrating ELLs in a school system; note the value of my findings and demonstrate the implications; reiterate the limitations to my study; provide suggestions for future research; and conclude with a final reflection.

Thematic Overlaps between Findings and Literature

After reviewing the findings and comparing them with that which I have presented in the literature review, as well as other literature outside the confines of the prescribed literature review, it was apparent that there was an overlap in the themes found, despite the different geographic locations, groups of participants and/or the methods that have been used to collect the data.

Acceptance of teachers and school. From the beginning of the study until the end, the participants expressed their happiness with the school, the teachers they had, as well as the peers they interacted with on a daily basis. But as one read in the findings section, there were areas relating to the academic and social lives of the participants of which they did not appear to be happy with; namely, the initial and continued struggle for some participants to develop relationships with English L1 peers; the EAL programming not always challenging enough; the desire for more lessons that highlight what is

meaningful to them such as culture and country; the apparent conflict between ELLs who have been at the school for a while and new ELLs coming from war-torn areas; and for some, discontent with the use of the primary language in the EAL classroom setting.

Perhaps one question that could have been asked in the final meetings with the participants to address the findings would have been if they were truly content with the school, the teachers, the classmates and the services they had. However, I chose not to ask this question as the purpose of my study was to capture the essence of the phenomenon of which the participants wanted to share and not have them revisit their outlook on the system they have grown to know and may or may not have accepted.

The style of questioning and the provision of prompts was to allow for participant responses to be both organic and spontaneous, and be openly and unconditionally received in the spirit of bringing about positive change and/or improvements to the system in place for Southwestern Ontario ELLs. The goal of this research was not to censor or provoke, but rather secure constructive feedback and informal evaluations of programming by the very persons for whom it was designed.

Rodriguez et al. (2009) surveyed both ELLs and their English L1 peers between Kindergarten and Grade 5 at a rural public school in eastern North Carolina USA of which the results indicated that as students got older, there was a decline in positive feelings regarding their educational experience. It was further suggested in the discussion that although this data did not identify any significant issues that would be affecting this change in viewpoint, the data suggested that the older students got, the more perceptive they became of their educational experience. Comparing the upper age limit of the participants surveyed in the Rodriguez et al. (2009) study and the age of the participants

in this study, perhaps some of the findings/themes that have been uncovered in this study could account for some of the underlying factors in the change of opinion and apparent decline in the level of satisfaction of the ELLs in the Rodriguez survey.

Teacher instruction and responsiveness. After reviewing the results under this theme, it confirms much of what I already knew as a teacher prior to the commencement of this study; namely, each teacher has his or her own methods of teaching the curriculum which they are given, and that students are more or less engaged or even disengaged in certain activities based on their level of interest, other thoughts on their minds, and/or their motivation. As expected, a variety of in-class group and individual activities (i.e. reading comprehension activities to spelling bees) were described and/or shown by the participants, some explained with more enthusiasm than others.

Despite the explanations provided of teacher instruction and responsiveness by the various participants, it was difficult to understand and/or rationalize the choices of the teachers and the objectives of the respective activities/lessons given without having had the chance to consult with the teacher and review the respective document(s) used during the lesson. However, what was interesting was the comparison between the teaching practices of the EAL teacher and that of the teacher in the mainstream classroom as shared by the participants.

Based on the participant interviews, it appeared that the EAL teachers placed a greater emphasis on independent study. Most of the time, the ELLs worked independently when reading books and answering questions relating to what they have read; writing sentences using specific vocabulary provided to them based on predetermined themes; and, using prefabricated handouts/materials to identify and

practice various grammatical structures, phonics and punctuation such as subject verb agreement, consonant sounds and incorrect capitalization. According to the participants, the grade level of the material was determined by the level of which the student was perceived to be working by the teacher. Outside the one mention of drama being used in A.E.'s EAL classroom with a lack of description of what that lesson actually involved, there did not appear to be any other learning activities beyond independent work and direct teacher to student discussion/feedback. Moreover, if the teacher explained a concept to an ELL and the message was not understood, there did not appear to be any alternative approaches and/or methods utilized by the teacher to make the concept better understood. In a few instances, the participants indicated that although there were plenty of checkmarks, they would have liked some notes and/or discussion relating to their progress or lack thereof. Similarly, a participant in Gebhard's (2004) study, reported a concern relating to the teacher's lack of feedback and scaffolding that her participant felt to be required at that point in time.

On the other hand, the participants indicated that their teacher in the mainstream classroom provided them with work that the teacher determined suitable for their level; got the ELLs and their English L1 peers moving around the classroom to communicate and gather information from each other; purposefully grouped the ELLs to work together on activities when it came to group work; and/or taught the students how to accomplish a task in a variety of ways or approach a problem using more than one strategy. Although M.D. did not mind the independent seatwork in her EAL classroom, she appreciated the differentiation in approaches when it came to instruction she experienced in the homeroom. Furthermore, there appeared to be more of a use of extrinsic rewards in the

mainstream classroom (i.e. points during spelling bees, giving students opportunity to work on math, and candy during French class), which was reported to be most appealing to the participants.

EAL programming generally seen as being too easy. It was clear that the majority of the participants, spread across three schools and from two school boards, perceived the difficulty of work they were receiving in their EAL classroom as easy. Although the participants in the study referred to the work as easy, the question raised is whether or not it was indeed easy for them. Given the limited secondary resources that the participants shared with me, and that other resources and their daily school work for their EAL class must be left in the classroom unless assigned for homework, it was hard to gauge as to how they were actually performing in their EAL class. However, based on the studies that were found within the literature review, as well as other relevant literature found outside the original parameters I had set, there appears to be ELLs from the United States who share the same opinion relating to the difficulty of schoolwork they receive. According to Nykiel-Hebert (2010), the elementary level ELLs in her study claimed that they were given busy work during class time and they were “excluded from grade level work” (Given Busy Work section, para. 3). Gebhard (2004) suggested a similar finding. Cohen (2012) indicated that although his adolescent participants felt comfortable in their learning environment, there was a belief that the work that was assigned to them was not challenging, meaningful, nor useful for life after graduation.

Looking at this theme in the Ontario context, Kanno and Applebaum (1995) reported parallel findings relating to the opinions of adolescent ELLs to those of Cohen (2012) with one ELL recognizing that what she was learning in her EAL programming

was what she already knew, and not what she had in mind to study. Furthermore, Broomes (2013) suggested that Canadian immigrants have had to face the challenge of overcoming the obstacle that teachers have set “low expectations” of their students (p. 6).

When reviewing the secondary resources that were shared with me, I can envision what the students in my study and the students in the aforementioned articles meant by work being considered easy. A.H’s schoolwork (Figures 3 & 4) resembles that of what one would typically see in the early primary grades despite him being between nine and twelve years of age, and being at Stage three or higher in his English language competency as per the participant selection criteria. Although the vocabulary and/or structures may have needed to be at the introductory level, the illustrations and size of font could have been geared more toward the interests and style of a junior-aged student. When viewing R.A’s work (Figures 5 & 6), she appeared to have received perfect (given the checkmarks and no apparent feedback) on her exercise involving capitalization and proper punctuation. M.D. mentioned that one of her exercises comprised of writing, ‘I like (blank)’ over and over again with no context. According to my observations and the information that has been shared with me, the participants were asking for class assignments and/or homework that would be more challenging and most definitely more age appropriate.

Many of the participants indicated that there were challenges in learning English in the EAL classroom context. One such challenge experienced by R.A. was the same one found by Cummins et al. (2012) when an ELL had difficulty finding words that directly translated from the primary language to English. Another challenge was shared by S.B.- who misheard what the teacher said and/or did not understand what was being asked the

first time around. However, despite these and other challenges, ELLs desired work that would be challenging, meaningful and beneficial for them.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) in *Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1-8* addresses these findings, as well as the findings from the preceding theme, in their recommendation that there should be differentiation in the instruction and assessment of each student based on the student's previous schooling experience and what is appropriate for his or her cognitive development. Although some accommodations and/or modifications may be made as required, the work should continue to be "challenging but attainable for the learner at his or her present level of English proficiency, given the necessary support from the teacher" (p. 50). But is this being done?

Even with Ministry guidelines and directives, it appears that many teachers still struggle in putting these suggestions into practice as they may not have the requisite skills and or knowledge. Research has indicated that this is a common theme amongst mainstream classroom teachers trying to accommodate ELLs. For example, Hansen-Thomas, Grosso-Richins, Kakkar and Okeyo (2016) reported that teachers in rural Texas had difficulty teaching ELLs in their schools due to a lack of teaching training, professional development, and resources. As stated by one teacher participating in their study:

I do not feel I am properly trained to help them learn the English language in my classroom. We are not provided with any materials to teach them on the appropriate level. I know we are supposed to just modify what we are already teaching for the ELLs, but sometimes if they are beginners or intermediate, it is

really hard to simplify so they can understand. I just really feel that I do not adequately have the training or materials to serve my ELLs in the way they should or need to be served. (p. 320)

Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) found that teachers were challenged by the lack of time available to attend to each ELL and his or her individual learning needs; the ELLs' lack of academic vocabulary and understanding of idioms and other content; the inability to communicate effectively with parents lacking English language skills; their lack of success in garnering in-class participation amongst the ELLs; and ensuring what was read to the ELLs was understood.

Unfortunately, quality professional development and teacher preparation relating to practices in working with ELLs was a recurring challenge for these teachers in trying to best meet the learning needs of the ELLs placed in their mainstream classrooms (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). This concern was not dissimilar to what was shared by 326 ESL teachers surveyed across Canada who likewise felt the need for an improvement in skills relating to classroom management and resources for both the instruction and support of ELLs (French & Collins, 2011); thus, supporting both the need and desire for more quality professional development.

Lack of focus on country and culture/ an attachment to country of origin.

One of the most significant findings that emerged in the data of this study was the unanimous agreement among participants that nothing relating to their culture or country of origin has been incorporated into any lessons. Moreover, the participants disclosed that they were not aware of any resources, such as books relating to their culture nor country of origin to be found at the school. If this is indeed the case, the participants and their

peers in the mainstream classroom were and will continue to be missing out on invaluable learning opportunities.

According to Cummins et al. (2012), a students' (both ELL and English L1) level of engagement with literacy was a determinant for their literacy achievement. Literacy engagement is accomplished by the teacher scaffolding the student for meaning by utilizing different means of teaching; connecting what is being taught to aspects in the students' lives so they can have a context; acknowledging and respecting the identities of the students by granting them the opportunity to demonstrate what they know with their peers with the use of their primary language and other language(s); and lastly, providing students with the opportunity to shift from their primary language to English to extend their language with terms found in the curriculum. Howard (2012) explained that improvements in literacy are apparent when the literature the students is reading is meaningful to them. Nykiel-Hebert (2010) asserted that reading should, "bring some intellectual and/or emotional rewards to the reader; if it doesn't, it becomes a pointless exercise" (Storytelling section, para. 4). Howard (2012) believed this could be accomplished through students recommending books for the teacher to use. As indicated in my findings, when the participants were asked if they had the opportunity to read a book relating to their interests or about their culture and/or country of origin, all but two of them wanted to read about the latter for their own reasons. One of the two who did not share the majority opinion still wanted books about his country and culture at school because he also had a keen interest in that topic. Culturally valued activities can enhance the language acquisition process. From the Sociocultural perspective, honing in on what is of interest and/or what is familiar will serve as a foundation and/or context when the

ELL is trying to navigate the complexities of the English language (Simeon, 2016).

When teaching students in both the EAL classroom as well as their English L1 peers in the mainstream classroom, there is an opportunity to acknowledge not only the differences, but also the similarities between classmates. Similar to when S.B. explained to that she wanted her classmates in the mainstream classroom to understand why she could not touch boys, Nykiel-Hebert (2010) reported a misunderstanding of religious and cultural beliefs between her participants and their peers. Cognizant of this, Nykiel-Hebert (2010) determined the concept of death to be relatable amongst her participants and had her participants prepare an exercise that allowed them to showcase “culture-specific norms” relating to the subject (Uncovering the Invisible section, para. 3).

Nykiel-Hebert (2010) discovered that the teacher of the ELLs at her school was providing inappropriate literature to her participants, which was lacking in cultural sensitivity. Similarly, M.D., a participant whose family experienced a tragic loss when they were in Iraq during the war, was given something to read to her peers about Syria (her home before fleeing to Canada). It was about the war in Syria and, according to her, “people dying.” This resultantly discouraged her from wanting to learn about the rich history and culture of that country because she, and possibly her peers, have equated Syria with war and death.

Interestingly and greatly in support of the suggestions of the participants, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) in *Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1-8* requires educators to capitalize on opportunities to celebrate diversity where ELLs and their domestic peers are encouraged to appreciate similarities and differences as between them to create increased respect and

a “sense of belonging” (p. 17). On a related note, the Ministry also recommends that schools demonstrate an interest in the countries of origin of their respective students and provide books that are not only about those countries, but are also written in the primary language of the ELLs.

Establishing a sense of belonging. While sitting with the participants and vicariously living the social aspect of being at school, I came to learn more about the relationships that they had developed and with whom. Although the participants expressed that they had friends from both the mainstream classroom as well as the EAL classroom, it appeared that the friends who they referred to the most were those from their EAL class; can speak their primary language; and/or English was not their primary language. This appeared to be true even with relationships that some of the participants had developed prior to beginning school as they too had the aforementioned in common. According to Nykiel-Herbert (2010), such a finding should come as no surprise: “Young people gravitate towards members of their ethnic/cultural groups even in schools which make deliberate, concerted efforts to promote and affirm diversity in all their curricular and social activities” (A Resource for Learning section, para. 5). Moreover, she claimed “ELLs also seem to gravitate socially towards other ELLs, even if they are from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds” (A Separate Classroom section, para. 5).

The male participants in this study utilized their athletic abilities to earn the respect and eventually befriend peers from the mainstream classroom. This finding is not unique. Gebhard’s (2004) reported that her participant had expressed a concern that the other kids initially excluded her from playing soccer; however, when she was finally afforded the opportunity to prove her skillset to her English L1 peers, they respected her

talent and continued to let her play. Similarly, Kanno and Applebaum (1995) reported that one of their participants had finally had the opportunity of developing a rapport with English L1 peers and practiced oral communication through the playing of sports and music, where one could prove him or herself without having an advanced level of English language competency.

The relationship between social-emotional wellbeing and academic success has been a recent topic of interest for two other researchers. In studying the dynamics between ELLs and EP (English-proficient) students, Niehaus and Adelson (2014) suggested that it is “likely that social-emotional concerns may at least partially explain the relationship between language status (ELL or EP) and academic achievement” (p. 835). Furthermore, Niehaus and Adelson (2014) found that “as ELL children’s social-emotional concerns in the classroom increased, their level of academic achievement decreased” (p. 835); therefore, concluding that an “ELLs’ social and emotional wellbeing may be equally important” to that of academic needs (p. 839). Based on these findings, Niehaus and Adelson (2014) determined that teachers, administrators and school counsellors needed to recognize the social-emotional vulnerability of ELLs and acquire the additional knowledge and skillset required to more effectively intervene and prevent any adverse effects relating to the academic success of ELLs in their schools.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) in *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom* acknowledged that homesick ELLs typically struggle with both the daunting task of learning a new language while dealing with the challenges of developing friendships with English L1 peers. The document also mentioned that an ELL may miss friends and family from one’s country of

origin; may develop an identity crisis where one does not want to accept Canadian culture; or, in the alternative, choose to distance oneself from everything relating to one's culture to assimilate into the new culture. To allow the students to feel welcome, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) suggested that schools should adopt "equity and inclusionary practices" in order to develop self-confidence; a positive self-image of who they are and where they come from; and positive relationships with others in the school community (p. 22). Moreover, schools should also be "provid[ing] a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, bullying, violence, and expressions of hate" (p. 22). Although progress has been made in these areas, the findings of this study indicate that the ideal is not necessarily the reality for many ELLs. It appears that increased and/or improved programming may need to be implemented to achieve these Ministry directives.

Language competency makes one happier/ EAL classroom viewed as a limitation. I believe that language is powerful. It is a tool that can be used to initiate contact, express ideas, and convince individuals. In the case of the participants in my study, having the beginning of English language competency has opened up opportunities for them to some extent. Having this competency has allowed them to initiate and create friendships with their English L1 peers; do well on assignments that they have been given in class; and if they prove that they are capable of taking classes at the same level as the students in mainstream classroom, they will have more freedom in choosing where they would like to go to school at the secondary level. However, despite the success, there was some hardship experienced by the participants in my study while developing their English language abilities in addition to the challenges of being new students at their

respective schools.

It appeared that similar hardships have been experienced by ELLs elsewhere. According to Cummins et al. (2012), students may have felt isolated from their peers because they could not understand what their peers were talking about and they would often end up being the subject matter of the joke being told. Similarly, Lau (2013) indicated that her participants in seventh and eighth grade had told her that they had been bullied for their lack of language ability and that they did not know many of the things that were being said to them until they learned the meaning of the words and/or expressions later on. The bullying took the form of both physical and verbal abuse. They were slapped, made fun of, yelled at, laughed at and ostracized. These kinds of experiences were very similar to those recalled by R.A. and other participants in this study. A.H. and M.D.'s feelings of being ostracized by one's peers in the Canadian mainstream classroom were shared by the participant in the research of Lau (2013) and Li (2007), as nobody wanted to play with their participants either just because they could not speak English.

What was most surprising to me was what R.A. said about her outlook on life: "If I get sad or cry, then what's going to happen? It's still the same... (inhales). When I was small I learned like that [*sic*]." When it came to a problem that needed to be addressed and solved, there appeared to have been a defeatist attitude adopted especially amongst the female participants. Similarly Kanno and Applebaum (1995) spoke of one ELL in their study who had been on the receiving end of a harsh insult from a Canadian student and later expressed to the researcher, "I can't do anything about it. There's no point in minorities standing up and fighting" (p. 43). According to Lau (2013), there is a sense of

helplessness and shame amongst girls who do not have strong English language abilities; thus, leading to them not actively seeking assistance when they get bullied.

When referring to the preliminary work that should be done in determining the appropriate placement of an ELL, *English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, K to 12* suggests that the ELL and his or her family should be consulted to ensure that the student's needs and/or expectations are met (OME, 2007a). Therefore, it could be assumed that part of this process would include due consideration in placing ELLs as much as possible with English L1 peers as "their academic and social development will be enhanced in an environment where they are learning with students of the same age" (p. 44). Moreover, it is up to the school board and the respective guidance counsellor(s) of the chosen school to provide the ELL and his or her family with information of all of the possibilities that are available to that student; namely, "career possibilities and educational pathways that will help them to achieve their career goals" (p. 20).

Although the Ministry does not view placement in the EAL classroom as a limitation, this can be the case if the process of placement or the availability of suitable placements and/or services are not available. The process of determining where the ELL goes for high school and the trajectory of that student's opportunities is determined by the initial placement of the student based on the language assessment process, and how well he or she achieves personal goals as set by the student, teacher and guidance counsellors (OME, 2007a). The better the ELL performs, the more choices/opportunities that he or she has; thus the apparent need for age and grade appropriate programming whenever possible.

Unfortunately it appeared from the findings that some ELLs see that path to be determined long before a high school guidance counsellor would ever be engaged in the process and, as such, have perceived their options to have been limited by the very same programming that was supposed to assist them. For example, R.A. who wants to be a doctor, indicated her concern of “get[ting] out of ESL” as soon as possible to help her achieve her goal. R.A.’s concern serves as one more example as to why the EAL program placement process and the use of inappropriate age/grade learning resources should be considered areas for board and/or Ministry review.

Concerns about aggression. What came as a surprise to me were the somewhat negative perceptions and somewhat hostile reactions of some of the participants toward their new Syrian refugee classmates over the course of the last few months- especially since these participants have also gone through the same process of being new students at their school and learning English. To the contrary, Li (2007) had very different findings as her participant wanted to assist a new student as she saw that the new girl was not strong in her English language competency. Yet again, her participant may not have moved away from her friends and family without consultation as did Hickey’s (2012). In addition, these other ELLs may not have had the ongoing turmoil and disturbing experiences, and have travelled with those memories in mind, as did the participants mentioned in the related study completed by Nykiel-Hebert (2010).

There could be other possibilities for this alleged conflict as reported by the participants in this study. As Wielgosz and Molyneux (2015) suggested ELLs frequently act out in class due to boredom or because tasks were too difficult; which of course, supports the benefit of finding resources and developing schoolwork that both is both

meaningful and appropriately challenging to the student.

In this research study, perhaps the new students from Syria are having a difficult time being away from their family and friends and/or are overwhelmed by the transition to their new home/school? Or perhaps the participants who have expressed this form of resentment against their new classmates are the instigators of this conflict and were merely recalling the situation from their perspective? However, I find it interesting that participants, from all three of the schools and from the two different school boards, have described similar experiences with this new group of refugees.

Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators: Grades 3-12 suggested that some ELLs will require assistance beyond academics as many ELLs and their families may have endured a great deal of hardship prior to and during their immigration to Canada and, as such, “may still carry the burden of separation and loss” (OME, 2008b, p. 8). In addition, it is suggested that many ELLs have faced and may continue to face the challenges of other issues and concerns including “unresolved asylum claims, financial hardships, limited facility with English, outstanding health issues, and the isolation and the newness of their lives in Ontario” (p. 8). These aforementioned factors could in turn be a factor as to why the ELLs in this study reported so much conflict between themselves and their classmates, such as but limited to, the new Syrian refugee students. Although suggestions have been provided to educators, is there more that can be done?

On point, Zilio (2016a) reported that over twenty-five thousand Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada since February 2016 and in a subsequent article, that more were to arrive in the near future (Zilio, 2016b). If this in-class conflict happening at school

were to continue, further investigation could result in subject matter for a research opportunity worth investigating.

The lack of English usage in the EAL classroom. To the dismay of some participants, the use of the ELL's primary language in the EAL classroom appears to be becoming the norm. A.H. claimed that he changes the language he is using in class based on who is talking to him, but other participants such as A.E., R.A., and S.B., would prefer to be in a completely English immersed environment where others speak English only. However, none of the participants have adopted Anglicized names nor expressed any interest in doing so. The initials utilized in sharing the findings in this study were chosen exclusively to ensure confidentiality of those who participated.

Although English only in the classroom was the preference of most participants in this study, there is conflicting research regarding the use of a student's primary language during language learning process. One example would be the use of the Literacy Engagement Framework as described by Cummins et al. (2012) where ELLs are guided through scaffolding, utilize their primary language as a learning tool to brainstorm ideas, and then use these ideas to write a story in the new language being learned (English). Li (2007) discovered that the teacher of her participant tried implementing a rule where only English was utilized and this made her participant upset. It was only when her participant had the opportunity to use her primary language (Chinese) in class that she felt comfortable and was able to interact with her friends. Although the preference for more English in the EAL classroom environment has been expressed, this is not necessarily shared by all as identified in the research. Furthermore, from a Sociocultural perspective,

the use of the ELL's L1 can be and is often used as a tool when learning an additional language (Simeon, 2016; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Acknowledging that lack of academic success was not necessarily about capability, but rather about language, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) in *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom* suggests that most ELLs are capable of achieving the learning goals in the Ontario classroom if it were to be delivered in their primary language. In further support of this position, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008b) suggested in *Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators: Grades 3-12* that ELLs be provided opportunities to “maintain and use first language as a bridge to new learning” (p. 13) and encourage educators to have ELLs use their background knowledge and their primary language as a “strategic tool” for their learning (p. 38). However, it is apparent from the information shared by the participants in this study that the use of the primary language in the EAL classroom is not used as judiciously as intended in the aforementioned Ministry documents.

Math & French- an even playing field. The majority of the participants preferred the subject area of math. This did not come as much of a surprise based on S.B.'s response of math being “just numbers.” This parallels the comments shared in research completed by Hickey (2012) where the participant claimed that, “You just have to deal with numbers” since the switching of code between the primary language and English is not as prevalent as in other subject areas (p. 151). Broomes (2013) determined that the variance of the math scores between ELLs and their English L1 mainstream classroom peers was small and that there was a higher probability of foreign-born ELLs

performing better in mathematics than their English L1 peers. Research has indicated that this could be made possible if an ELL were to be taught math using strategies conducive to his or her learning and language abilities, and if the teacher fostered a supportive math learning environment which respected the ELL's culture and linguistic needs (Lee, Lee & Amaro-Jiménez, 2011; Nguyen & Cortes, 2013; Uribe-Flórez, Araujo, Franzak, & Writer, 2014).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) indicated in *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom* that math is not necessarily easier than other core subjects for ELLs especially since a major component of the mathematics curriculum revolves around the use of “communication” to explain the rationale for their answers (p. 28). However, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) suggested in *Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1-8* that during the initial assessment period with new ELLs, “it is often a good idea to begin with an assessment of mathematical knowledge and skills. English language learners may find it easier to display competence with numbers and symbols than with words of a new language” (p. 34). Perhaps the implementation of this suggested practice may account for this current preference of math over other subjects by the participants in this study.

What I found equally surprising was the participants' comfort with French class. Carr (2009) discovered that the performance of ELLS in French class “was generally consistent with that of their Anglophone peers” (p. 809). This could in turn explain the interest of participants of this study with learning French, as for at least one subject there was a more even playing field to meet with success. This belief of being at the same level

of skill as their English L1 peers combined with enjoyable activities such as singing in class, the opportunity to receive extrinsic rewards (i.e. candy) and the perceived usefulness of learning French as an additional language appeared to have provided for a very positive learning experience for the majority of the ELLs.

It was also interesting to note that Carr (2009) found that the English language proficiency of those ELLs immersed in a more intensive French program was higher as they appeared to be transferring their newly learned L3 skills toward learning English. The potential advantages to this choice of placement (i.e. French immersion) would be a very interesting avenue for future research.

Relating to the experience of learning of French, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) had the following to say about ELLs and their L1 English peers in the mainstream classroom:

Children who are learning the English language are likely to feel successful since all students in Ontario are learning French as a second language, and the focus is on oral language using practical, everyday French. Students are able to transfer knowledge about how language works and this may contribute to their overall academic success. (p. 31)

These Ministry findings confirmed much of what was shared by the participants of this study relating to the relative ease with math and the expressed comfort level during French class as compared to other core subjects.

More parent-teacher communication/ parental involvement. Lastly, the participants indicated that there is little to no parent-teacher communication, nor parental involvement in their classroom. I found it very revealing how they described the parent to

teacher dynamic. Although it was difficult for me to gauge the amount and quality of communication between the parties, or lack thereof, due to limited secondary sources that were shared with me; all but one of the participants agreed that this relationship was important and they wished there would be more communication relating to how they could improve in school. I found it very telling in that the participants in this study appeared to hold such a high level of regard for the opinion of their parents as it related to their academic success. As for addressing the participants' comment about parental communication with the school, or lack thereof, it is difficult to speculate as to why they appear to be longing for this closer relationship, and why there would be a lack of communication to begin with. Further inquiry would be helpful to ascertain and potentially address this apparent disconnect between home and school.

I did however find three Canadian articles indicating a disconnect between the beliefs of home and school as to what was occurring during programming. Guo (2006) provided the following reasons for this apparent gap in dialogue between the parents of ELLs' and their teachers: language barriers; parents not having an understanding of the educational system in Canada; poor attitudes demonstrated by teachers and the possibility of racism within the school system; different viewpoints on education and the way content should be taught; and lastly, a different outlook on the parent to teacher relationship depending on the culture of the ELL. In a subsequent study, Guo (2007) found that the majority of parents of ELLs believed that their children spent too much time in the EAL classroom and should be with their English L1 peers in the mainstream classroom; the work given to ELLs is not challenging enough; there is a lack of communication between the teacher and parents on how the ELLs are performing in their

EAL programming; and/or, the approaches on how to teach English are contested.

Similar concerns were implied by the participants of this study, but even with considerable prodding, there was not this level of elaboration.

Similar to the findings of Guo (2006), Lai and Ishiyama (2004) discovered that parents felt that they could not communicate with the teachers of their children due to their poor English language competency. In fact this limited ability with the English language also prevented many of them from assisting their children with homework. Furthermore, from a cultural perspective, the parents in Lai and Ishiyama (2004) felt that the school culture was different from what they were used to as teachers were seen as professionals in their culture; that there were higher expectations for students with more of a focus on academics; and that parental involvement was not a major component of school culture in their country of origin. Between the language barrier and the aforementioned cultural expectations toward education, many parents reported limited interest and/or the belief that they had little to contribute towards what was happening at their child's school. Lastly, Lai and Ishiyama (2004) reported parents finding parent-teacher meetings coming across as too formal and although they saw teachers as authority figures, many expressed the preference for more informal interaction between teachers and parents as well as between students and teachers.

Panferov (2010) spoke of one parent who felt disempowered due to a lack of English language proficiency, and from depending on her children to serve as an interpreter/translator for subject beyond their years, which in turn had affected their parent/child dynamic. In the United States, Jung and Zhang (2016) reported that parents

were not communicating with the teachers nor visiting the school very frequently because of language barriers.

Looking at the parent-teacher dynamic and parental involvement from the teacher's perspective, Lai & Ishiyama (2004) found that teachers attributed the lack of parental involvement to the gap in language competency, despite the fact that parents appeared to have a keen interest in their children's education. Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar and Okeyo (2016) received the same opinion from teachers in Texas who felt that the lack of support and communication was attributable to the language barrier.

There are several Ontario Ministry documents that have addressed both the need and importance of this parental communication and/or involvement as desired by the ELLs participating in this study. *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* encourages parental communication and/or engagement through policies that require schools to “provide greater support to ensure that parents and guardians are welcomed, respected and valued by the school community as partners in their children's education” (OME, 2014a, p. 7). In addition, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2014b) stated in *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* that “teachers must use assessment and evaluation strategies and related practices and procedures that: ...are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course” and that this communication as between home, school and student continues on an on-going basis for the remainder of the academic year (p. 25). Lastly, as mentioned in *Supporting English Language Learners; A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1 to 8*, the Ontario

Ministry of Education (2008a) encourages schools to make community partners and parents alike feel welcome and encourage them to become actively involved in the school community. It appears that the process has been put in place, and now it is just up to the various stakeholders to determine how to put it in action.

In summary, the focus of my research was on the perspectives of junior-level ELLs to understand the phenomenon of learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario publicly funded schools and seeing how this experience relates to the ELL's achievement of short and long term academic success and psychosocial wellbeing. However, given findings from both the literature and the perspectives shared by the participants of this study, there is room, and most certainly grounds, for future research.

Implications for Practice

Moving forward with the findings from this study, there are implications for educators and those affiliated with the school boards located in Southwestern Ontario.

To begin with, looking at the ELL experience in school from the academic point of view, the interests of the ELLs do not appear to be aligned with the work that they are receiving in their EAL programming nor in the mainstream classroom. The majority of the ELLs have been longing for material in the EAL and mainstream classroom that is considered by them to be more challenging and meaningful. This level of engagement with the material should not be underestimated as Cummins et al. (2012) indicated the high degree to which PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) holds literacy engagement to reading performance. As such, they suggest allowing students to utilize their background knowledge, as oppose to completing work with a weak to no frame of reference (Cummins et al., 2012).

However, before proceeding on with the next implication, I would like to briefly address the potential for any large degree of reliance on the role of PISA at the local level. The findings of Rutkowski, Rutkowski and Plucker (2014) strongly suggested that although PISA is a “decent measurement of academic achievement for many countries and many systems...it can’t be targeted for the needs of a particular country” nor should an economic institution be advising on domestic educational policy (p. 72). Even though, Fischbach, Keller, Preckel and Brunner (2013) found there was a positive correlation of higher PISA proficiency scores with a lower probability of change of academic direction or dropping out of school, Rutkowski et al. (2014) suggested there are more appropriate tools to determine how well students at the local level would be able to operate in a globalized world. Results from PISA proficiency tests have a role in understanding ones educational system in a global context but not to be the justification behind a “policy prescription” (p. 72).

Secondly, the participants clearly indicated that they have experienced group work, paired work, and independent study (the latter of which the majority preferred) with varying success. Given their preferences, teachers should use this knowledge together with intuitiveness and the diversification of materials for future planning. Rather than just leaving students to complete independent reading and writing exercises, and using prefabricated worksheets, the teacher should engage in scaffolding to challenge the ELLs’ abilities as well as showcase how these lessons are important/applicable to the students’ lives. ELLs need to be made more responsible for their learning and if there are mistakes in student work, the teachers needs to address these mistakes and provide constructive feedback as to how these errors can be resolved. Moreover, if a concept is

not understood and/or it is not demonstrated in the student's work, collaborate on a solution. Smaller class sizes and/or the utilization of shadow teachers in larger classes could help facilitate more individualized attention in meeting the academic needs of ELLs as set out above.

A third suggestion would be to create a learning space for groups of new ELLs prior to being immersed into the public school system, as seen in Nykiel-Hebert's (2010) study. Iraqi ELLs were taught using English that is at an appropriate level of English for them together with strategies and curriculum that were matched to that of the ELLs' "experiential knowledge" (Slower Linguistic Progress section, para. 3). This type of programming would include the norms and values of which they are used to and would also allow them the opportunity to experience "educational equality" from the beginning and meet academic success (A Separate Classroom section, para. 3).

Taking this concept one step further, a jump start intensive program for new ELLs could be designed and implemented within one of the existing schools where students will be able to grasp the fundamentals of Canadian customs and culture to allow them to grow into their own identity and settle into the larger identity as a whole. In addition, they would learn customs and procedures that they would come to expect in the mainstream classroom, and be taught essential English that would assist them with their day-to-day activities and assist them in interacting with both their future ELL and mainstream classroom their peers.

Another suggestion for when ELL arrive at their mainstream classroom would be to offer an opportunity for them to showcase their identities to their classmates without necessarily relying on language abilities. In Australia, Wielgosz and Molyneux (2015)

implemented a visual arts program where ELLs in EAL programming and their L1 peers in the mainstream classroom worked on individual art projects that allowed them to create work in “non-threatening, collaborative environments, which facilitated active, engaged learning and equitable opportunities for success” (p. 286). The visual arts program served as a tool to allow students to become aware of each other; create a topic for dialogue; and establish a positive start to schooling in a new environment for the ELLs.

From a more psychosocial perspective, a buddy program could be put in place where the ELLs would be assisted in establishing a relationship with an English L1 peer in the mainstream classroom, similar to that which was done twenty years ago elsewhere in Ontario (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). A formalized system such as this could assist in the process of introducing the ELLs to other peers and reduce the possibility of feeling alienated by the wider community, which could be attributed to the ELL’s personality, lack of confidence and/or a lack of understanding of how to initiate conversation with English L1 peers in the mainstream classroom. Cho and Reich (2008) suggested that a formal pairing of a higher level ELL or a mainstream peer with an ELL new to class provides opportunity for increased linguistic and cultural interaction. Moreover, with a buddy, an ELL would be more likely to take more risks to speak out in class (Cho & Reich, 2008). In further support of this type of initiative, Every et al. (2014) reported that buddy and peer-mentoring at nine schools in Australia proved to be highly effective in assisting with the settlement and transition of the children of asylum seekers into the local school system. The idea of a peer-support system is not a new concept and is already in use in many schools in Ontario in various degrees of formality but unfortunately, it is not

common place in all schools. Rather than just being an individual school and/or board project, a broader systemic initiative needs to be undertaken. Ideally, if there were to be a Ministry directive to make such programming mandatory province-wide, school boards would then be better positioned to secure the funding and provide the necessary professional development opportunities for teacher training and preparation for classroom implementation so all students could benefit.

Moving Forward

As demonstrated throughout this discussion, I have confirmed the majority of my findings with peer-reviewed literature and through reference to suggestions and directives from Ontario Ministry of Education documentation. I have taken the opportunity in this discussion section to confirm knowledge from the past in the context of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario, and I argue that I have provided evidence for future research to be conducted having uncovered information that is new and very much relevant to not only Southwestern Ontario, but to the Ontario educational system as a whole. Such topics would include the perceptions of English L1 junior-level students in Southwestern Ontario of ELL(s) when they are in the mainstream classroom; an examination of school experiences that include curriculum focused on the ELLs' culture and/or country; a longitudinal study of the interaction of the new Syrian refugee ELLs with their peers in both the mainstream and/or EAL classroom; ELLs and their perception of learning French alongside their English L1 peers; and the interaction or lack thereof between teachers and the parents of ELLs attending school within Southwestern Ontario. In addition, inquiries through *action research* could be undertaken to determine to what

degree the EAL programming being delivered at the local level is meeting the expectations as set out by Ministry directives and/or recommendations (Creswell, 2002).

Similar research to that which was completed in this study could be completed on the experiences of junior-level ELLs in Southwestern Ontario who are at Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and orientation (OME, 2008a). This research would grant ELLs at these earlier stages the opportunity to share their academic and psychosocial experiences and allow a researcher to determine if and where there are similarities and/or differences as compared to the findings to this current study.

One last area for future research could be the review of and/or ongoing assessment of the current Ministry EAL programming and whether this curriculum requires updates and/or revisions based on the learning needs of ELLs and any updates to core curriculum being delivered in the mainstream classroom.

Trustworthiness

It came to my attention that limitations to participant trustworthiness and researcher bias could have affected the validity of my findings. The four-month window of time I used to collect data from participants may or may not have encompassed a broad enough range of experiences to be reflective of the ‘whole picture’ of the phenomenon to be studied.

As for participant trustworthiness, the participants did not know who I was prior to recruitment. Given the fact that I was a stranger to my prospective participants, they may have been uncomfortable with sharing the truth and/or sensitive information with me despite agreeing to participate in the study. In addressing this concern I took the suggestions of Shenton (2004) into consideration and gave participants the option to not

participate and/or withdraw themselves from the study. I also provided the parents with the opportunity to withdraw their child from the study within the first month of agreeing to participate (i.e. submission date of their consent and assent form) because I wanted to respect my potential participants' choice to participate in this research. Shenton (2004) stated that providing this option for the participants would "ensure that the data collection sessions involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. Participants should be encouraged to be frank from the outset of each session [...]” (p. 66). Shenton (2004) continued to explain that all participants have the right to decide to withdraw from a study and “they should not be required to disclose an explanation to the investigator” (p. 67).

I provided participants and their parents with full disclosure in the assent and parental consent forms that they have the option to withdraw from participation within the first month of agreeing to participate in the study without any repercussions or explanation and can request that any or all recordings, images and/or references up to that point can be deleted. I also included in the consent form that was distributed to participants and their parents that once data collection has ceased (March 1, 2016), the results would have begun to be incorporated into my thesis and participants would no longer be able to request exclusion of data relating to him or her from the final write-up of this study. As mentioned previously, formal consents/assents were collected at the beginning of the study, active consent was requested at each point of personal contact with a participant, and lastly, member checking was done each time there was interaction with the researcher up to the date of the final follow-up interview to ensure accuracy of data.

Shenton (2004) also added that participants require affirmation that I was separate from the institutions/individuals to which the participants may be fearful of talking about. As such, I confirmed during the participant recruitment phase that none of my data collected nor any identifying material from the participants will be shared with anyone.

With regards to researcher bias, my values and/or previous experiences in the educational setting may have influenced my sense of judgment when deciding on themes; therefore, another researcher may have analyzed the data differently. However, as I previously mentioned, I utilized personal bracketing to provide the reader with an understanding of my perspective regarding the phenomenon at hand and that I have used this research opportunity to start fresh and gain a new perspective from the data I collected.

Lastly, the purpose of this study was to conceptualize the phenomenon at hand from the perspective of junior-level ELLs that fit my selection criteria and answer or address my research question and its respective sub-questions. Since this study has now elicited additional questions, my plan is to continue my studies of the chosen phenomenon in a subsequent study and continue my work in this area of research.

Conclusion

Similar to the hermeneutical phenomenological research study conducted by Hickey (2012), I feel have even more questions than when I began. Although the Ontario Ministry of Education has addressed every theme introduced in this study to some extent, and has elaborated on some of them in the many documents they have published to assist ELLs and inform teachers and English L1 peers in the Ontario classroom, there are still gaps. So, what more can be done?

If one were to choose to really listen to junior-level ELLs learning EAL in Southwestern Ontario public schools, it would be apparent that some changes to the system need to take place:

A good starting point would be for teachers to take advantage of learning initiatives which would allow them to develop a more global perspective on education, acquire teaching practices that they may not have been exposed to in Ontario and to learn firsthand what it is like to be new to a language and culture when dealing with the challenges of academics (Connelly & Xu, 2015; Howe & Xu, 2013; MacLeod, 2016; Stone & Petrick, 2013).

Next, it is suggested that there be board-wide professional development and/or teacher training for working with ELLs. This specialized training would be geared specifically to the modification of teaching strategies/approaches and teaching/learning resources to meet the grade and age-appropriate needs of ELLs. The findings of Hansen-Thomas et al (2016) and French and Collins (2011), as discussed earlier in this study, strongly support the perceived need of/desire for this type of training for both mainstream and EAL teachers. This would also address some of the concerns of the ELLs from this present study relating to their learning and social-emotional needs not necessarily being understood and/or being met.

Another recommendation from the findings would include more guidance from administrators to assist teachers with providing constructive feedback to ELLs during classroom activities, as well as during more formal assessment periods.

Furthermore, there has also been an indication that there needs to be access to additional student and teacher resources reflective of the rich cultures and traditions

belonging to ELLs, and the required funding to be allocated to schools and/or school boards to help facilitate this need. Included in this type of initiative would be the need for more professional development for Ontario elementary school teachers for strategies to promote these culturally rich resources and to create and/or facilitate a more respectful and tolerant school community as between ELLs from different countries of origin and/or between their English L1 peers.

Finally, there should also be the implementation of a system-wide jump-start transition/orientation program within designated schools for all ELLs prior to being immersed into the Ontario school system. This would allow ELLs new to the Ontario school system to learn Canadian customs and protocols; develop some fundamental English language skills; and be introduced to an English L1 buddy to assist with the academic and social demands of school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Script and Journal Prompts

Is Anyone Listening? – The Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for Junior-Level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)

Semi-Structured Interview Script

1. Tell me about you and your family.
2. Tell me about your school.
3. What are some of your favourite things to do at home and at school?
4. Would you describe school to be easy, challenging or difficult? Why?
5. How do you feel when you are getting ready to go to school in the morning and then how do you feel when you get home from school?
6. Describe what you like about your school day.
7. Describe what you do not like about your school day.
8. How often do you use Language X (student's first language) at school?
9. What do you like about using Language X at school?
10. Where do you learn English at school and who do you learn best from?
11. Describe some of your experiences with learning and using English at school.
12. How well do you get along with your classmates during class and at break times (recesses) throughout the day?
13. What is it like to work with other students in your class?
14. Describe your experiences with doing homework.
15. If you could change some things about school, what would they be? Why?

Is Anyone Listening? – The Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for Junior Level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)

Semi-Structured Interview Script (#2)

1. What was your first day like at _____ school?
2. What was done to make you feel welcomed at your school?
3. When did you start feeling good about being at your new school?
4. Is there a difference in your experience at school this year compared to last year? If so, what is different?
5. Do your parents ever come to the school? If so, why? If not, would you want them to come and why?
6. How important is your culture to you?
7. Does your teacher ever teach any lessons in class about your culture? Explain.
8. Are there any books about the country you came from or about your culture in the classroom or school library?
9. What advice do you have for any new student starting at your school? Why?

Prompts for Journal Entries (2-3 entries per week)

1. School was easy for me when _____. Explain
2. School was difficult for me when _____. Explain
3. I used English today when _____.
4. It was hard to use English today when _____.
5. At recess I _____.
6. Today was a great day because _____.
7. Today was difficult because _____.
8. If I could change anything about today, I would _____.
9. Something more I would like to share is _____.

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster and Recruitment Letter



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE!

Attention: Parents of English Language Learners

I am looking for 10 to 12 year old children who are learning English as a new language to take part in my study. Your child would be asked to:

- Be interviewed by Mr. Nevin MacLeod
- Have the interview audio recorded for only Mr. MacLeod to listen to
- And/or write a journal/diary about his or her thoughts about being in school
- Share schoolwork and other school documents of their choice with Mr. MacLeod

Your child would meet with Mr. MacLeod once every two or three weeks to have a brief conversation and to collect the journal. During this study, two interview sessions will be held with your child (60-90 minutes long).

In appreciation for your time, you and your child will receive a light meal at each interview session and when you come to review the findings of Mr. MacLeod's thesis at the end of the study.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Mr. Nevin MacLeod

Faculty of Education and Academic Development

University of Windsor

Email: _____ or call xxx-xxx-xxxx

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance
by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.**

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY
IN LEARNING ENGLISH IN ONTARIO!**

Attention: Parents of English Language Learners

I am looking for 10 to 12 year old children who are learning English as a new language to take part in my study.

Your child would be asked to:

- Be interviewed by Mr. Nevin MacLeod
- Have the interview audio recorded for only Mr. MacLeod to listen to
- And/or write in a journal/diary about his or her thoughts about being in school
- Share schoolwork and other school documents with Mr. MacLeod with your permission

Your child would meet with Mr. MacLeod once every two to three weeks to have a conversation and for Mr. MacLeod to collect the journal. During this study, two interview sessions will be held with your child (60- 90 minutes long).

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a light meal at each interview session and parents can review Mr. MacLeod's findings at the end of his study.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer your child for this study, please circle 'yes' in the box below and return this form to your child's school.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Sincerely,

Nevin MacLeod
Faculty of Education and Academic Development
University of Windsor
Email: _____ or call xxx-xxx-xxxx

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW

WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?	
YES, _____ Please print full name of child and phone number for future contact	NO _____

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance
by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.**

Principal's Recruitment Script

Date: _____

Dear Students,

Mr. MacLeod is asking you if you could help him with his study. He is graduate student at the University of Windsor who the school board and I trust very much. He would like to learn about your school experiences and what it is like to learn English in Ontario.

If you agree to be in Mr. MacLeod's study, he will ask you to meet with him once every two to three weeks in or outside of school between now and March 01, 2016. During this time, you may be asked to answer some questions in an interview. When Mr. MacLeod interviews you, you will be given a free meal.

You can write in a private journal a couple times a week. In the journal, you can write about your experiences in school and anything else you would like to talk about. Also, when you meet with Mr. MacLeod, he would like to take photos of some of your schoolwork but only with your permission.

Mr. MacLeod hopes that his study will help you and other students with learning English. Your participation would be much appreciated.

If you would like to participate in this study or have any questions when you get home, please have your parents call Mr. MacLeod at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or send him an email at _____. If you or your parents would feel more comfortable to contact me first, that is fine.

Thank you,

(Name of Principal)

Appendix C: Consent & Assent



PARENTAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Research Study: Is Anyone Listening? – The Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)

Your child has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Nevin MacLeod, from the Faculty of Education and Academic Development at the University of Windsor (Canada). Mr. MacLeod's research will be used as data for his Master of Education thesis and will also be considered for use in published articles as well as conference presentations.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Mr. Nevin MacLeod by email (_____) or cell phone (xxx)-xxx-xxxx or Dr. Geri Salinitri, faculty advisor, by phone (519-253-3000 Ext. 3961) or email (sgeri@uwindsor.ca)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn about the personal educational experiences of Gr. 4-6 English Language Learners in the Ontario publicly funded school system. Learning about this will help to identify ways to improve English as an Additional language programming and services.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to allow your child to volunteer for Mr. MacLeod's study, he or she will be asked to:

- Be interviewed by Mr. MacLeod

I CONSENT TO MY CHILD BEING INTERVIEWED IN THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Have the interview audio recorded strictly for Mr. MacLeod to listen to for memory recollection

I CONSENT TO MY CHILD BEING AUDIORECORDED IN THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Maintain a journal/diary where your child can write about his or her thoughts about his or her in-school experience(s)

I CONSENT TO MY CHILD KEEPING A JOURNAL FOR THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Allow your child's prized schoolwork and other school documents to be collected, photographed or photocopied for Mr. MacLeod's review

I AGREE TO SHARE MY CHILD'S SCHOOL WORK & SCHOOL DOCUMENTS TO ASSIST IN THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks and/or inconveniences associated with this study. However, should you have any concerns, you are free to send an email to the researcher in at any time up to and including, March 01, 2016 at _____. If you wish to have your child withdrawn from this study completely, please let Mr. MacLeod know by March 01, 2016. After this date, Mr. MacLeod has the right to keep the data collected for his thesis.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Your child will be provided a light lunch during interviews, the ability to share the perspectives of their educational experience (academic and social) in a Southwestern Ontario school with an Ontario certified teacher and ECE who is not there to judge or criticize him or her, and lastly, your child would have the opportunity to practice exercising his or her English proficiency (orally and written) and interacting with an English speaker. (Note: You will be asked if your child has any allergies to food or drink).

This study will also benefit society as your child's perspective could have an influence on the ways to improve the learning experience of English Language Learners in Ontario (i.e. teaching practices of both homeroom and EAL teachers, adapting school environment, etc.)

CONFIDENTIALITY

The identity of all participants will be kept in the strictest of confidence and all records of consent and other identifying material will be kept in a secured location where the door will always be locked. No participant involved in this study will be identified without his or her expressed and informed consent. All data and records created will be reserved for educational purposes and will not be released any other use. When no longer required for educational purposes, all records will be permanently erased and/or destroyed

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Should the participant (your child) have any concerns relating to this study, you and your child are free to request to be withdrawn from the study at any time up to March 01, 2016. Data collection finishes March 01, 2016 and all data collected up until this date will be kept secure and confidential by Mr. MacLeod and analysed for his thesis. This will be the last date to ask for any data collected from your child to be withdrawn; therefore, Mr. MacLeod retains the right to keep all data collected in this study on your child. Likewise, the investigator may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Such circumstances would include, but are not limited to, breach of confidentiality and/or use of the study for personal purposes without the expressed consent of all of those involved.

Reminder: If you decide to withdraw your child from the study, please send Mr. MacLeod an email at _____ or please give me a call at XXX-XXX-XXX before March 01, 2016.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will be used in Mr. MacLeod's thesis. The data may be considered for use in other articles as well as conference presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; email: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study, *Is Anyone Listening? – the Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)* as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

Date

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance
by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.**



_____, 2015

Dear Students,

I am asking you to be part of a research study. My name is Nevin MacLeod and I am a graduate student at the University of Windsor, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. I am doing this project to learn more about your experience in school and learning English.

During this study, I plan to:

- Be interviewed by Mr. MacLeod

I CONSENT TO BEING INTERVIEWED IN THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Have the interview audio recorded strictly for Mr. MacLeod to listen to for memory recollection

I CONSENT TO BEING AUDIORECORDED IN THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Maintain a journal/diary where I can write about my in-school experience(s)

I AGREE TO KEEPING A JOURNAL FOR THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

- Allow my prized schoolwork and other school documents to be collected, photographed or photocopied for Mr. MacLeod's review

I AGREE TO SHARE MY SCHOOL WORK & SCHOOL DOCUMENTS TO ASSIST WITH THIS STUDY?	
YES _____	NO _____

You don't have to be in the study. It's OK if you don't want to do it. However, if you decide to be in the study and you change your mind, it would be appreciated if you could tell me before March 01, 2016.

If you have questions, you can ask me at any time. Please call my cellphone- (xxx)-xxx-xxxx or send me an email at: _____

Thank you,

Nevin MacLeod
B.A, B.Ed, E.C.E., M.Ed (Candidate)

Please put a check mark next to one sentence and then sign the form.

I want to be in this study. _____

I do not want to be in this study. _____

Participant Signature

Date

CONFIDENTIALITY/NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT FORM

Research Study: Is Anyone Listening? – The Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I understand that the purpose of this study is to learn about the personal educational experiences of Gr. 4-6 English Language Learners in the Ontario publicly funded school system. Learning about this will help to identify ways to improve English as an Additional language programming and services in Southwestern Ontario and beyond.

ROLE WITHIN STUDY

I understand that Mr. MacLeod will require my services within his research study for his thesis as a translator and/or interpreter. Mr. MacLeod will ask me to accompany him on select days to assist with interpreting the interviews he will have with English Language Learners and translating written journals by the English language learners. I promise that all interpretations and translations in the study will be done accurately and efficiently.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I understand that participants and Mr. MacLeod have consensual agreement that all participant identifiers, participant information, materials relating to the participants, and all other data relating to this study will be kept secure and in the strictest of confidence. No participant involved in this study will be identified without his or her expressed and informed consent to Mr. MacLeod. All data and records created will be reserved for educational purposes relating to Mr. MacLeod's thesis and will not be released for any other use. When no longer required for educational purposes, all records will be permanently erased and/or destroyed.

WITHDRAWAL

Should I no longer want to participate in this study, I will advise Mr. MacLeod through an email at _____.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data collected in this study will be used in Mr. MacLeod's thesis. The data may be considered for use in other articles as well as conference presentations.

I understand all the content described above for the study, *Is Anyone Listening? – the Experience of Learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) for junior-level Southwestern Ontario English Language Learners (ELLs)*. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

Print Name

SIGNATURE OF TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETOR

Date: _____

These are the terms I set for my hired interpreter/translator during my study:

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

Date: _____

Active Consent for Continued Participation in Study

Name of Participant _____

For the period of: _____

Instructions: Please place a stamp to indicate your preference each day



Date:	Yes , I want to participate in the study today	YES	No , I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study today.	NO
Date:	Yes , I want to participate in the study today	YES	No , I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study today.	NO
Date:	Yes , I want to participate in the study today	YES	No , I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study today.	NO
Date:	Yes , I want to participate in the study today	YES	No , I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study today.	NO
Date:	Yes , I want to participate in the study today	YES	No , I <u>do not</u> want to participate in the study today.	NO



Thank you, Mr. Nevin MacLeod (Researcher) BA B.Ed ECE M.Ed (candidate)

Appendix D: Member Checking Verification Form

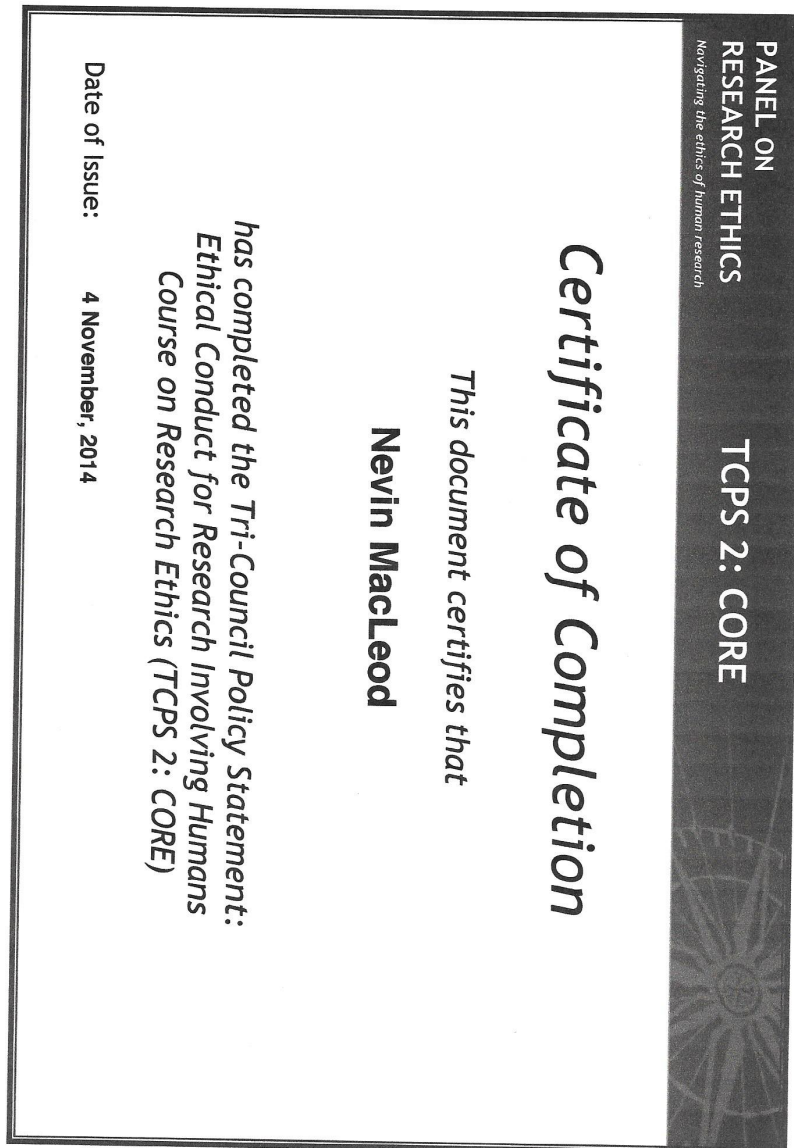
Date: _____

I, _____ (Name) _____, confirm that what Mr. MacLeod has written is what
I said when I met with him on _____ (Date) _____.

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix E: TCPS2 Core tutorial certificates for all investigators



VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Nevin Murray MacLeod

PLACE OF BIRTH: Windsor, ON

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1991

EDUCATION: St. Anne's Catholic High School, Belle River, ON, 2009
St. Clair College, ECE, Windsor, ON, 2014
University of Windsor, B.A., Windsor, ON, 2014
University of Windsor, B.Ed., Windsor, ON, 2014
Queen's University, A.Qs, Kingston, ON, 2015
University of Windsor, ABQ, Windsor, ON, 2016