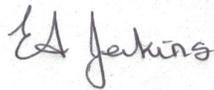A Critical Literature Review on English as a Second Language (ESL) Provision for

Newcomers, Including Global Citizenship Perspectives

Naomi L. Frey

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Faculty of Education, Yorkville University

Fredericton, New Brunswick

EA Jenkins

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alyson Jenkins

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Abstract

Although newcomers arrive in Canada every year, systemic barriers and inadequate knowledge of social socio-political and labour market systems affect the successful integration of permanent residents and refugees into Canadian communities and life in Canada. Even though newcomers study English as a second language (ESL) for settlement and employment purposes, many find the language training inadequately prepares them for work and job retention since the ESL classes may not take into consideration student's prior learning, transferable skills, or individual needs and goals. In my years of work in teaching and administration with newcomer immigrants, refugees, and service providing organizations, I have become increasingly interested in ways to incorporate transformative learning, social awareness, and employment training into my institution's current ESL curriculum. The aim is to shift the approach from settlement to integrating permanent residents and refugees, to facilitate in the development of active citizenship and employed individuals in Canadian society. My research has used the theoretical perspective of critical theory as a foundational viewpoint and the lens of social justice combined with the concept of global citizenship to look at the inequalities that exist for newcomers within the dominant ideologies that influence the current curricula. Ideas and solutions to incorporate transformative learning into ESL curriculum that considers newcomer needs and perspectives are examined in a critical literature review.

Keywords: ESL, transformative learning, social justice, critical theory, social change, global citizenship, and leadership for justice

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Introduction

Newcomers arrive daily to Canada with the goal of making this nation their home, and

for many this is the start of their journey looking for ways to improve their socio-economic

status, cultural awareness, and gain access to education and employment opportunities. They do

this by taking English as an Additional Language (EAL), more commonly known as English as a

Second language (ESL) classes with the intent of obtaining seamless integration into Canadian

society. English language acquisition has become an extension of services provided by post-

secondary institutions across Canada to encourage social and economic growth to "adapt to

globalization, new information and communication technologies, and the emergence of

knowledge-based economies" (Nesbit et al., 2013, p. 284). These classes are a means for

newcomers to not only gain recognition of language acquisition for citizenship, but to also obtain

workplace exposure, and entry into academic pathways.

ESL programming has presented opportunities and challenges to administrators and

educators at the college where I work and with the sector of newcomer supporting agencies at

large. This has led to my interest in questioning the purpose of ESL programming in anglophone

Canada; in particular, our department's curriculum, and how it could better support newcomer

permanent residents and refugees in building their capacity to become better informed active

citizens. Nesbit et al. (2013) stated that the liberalist view that focused on social justice and

greater community involvement has now shifted to one that is market driven and revenue

generating. There has been a transition from ESL for newcomers and refugees from grassroots

independently operated community initiatives to adult education that focuses on employability

(Nesbit et al., 2013). This push for rapid integration into employment is often done at the request

of government supporting agencies. In turn, this has impacted the need for a permanent resident

or refugee to study ESL or pursue training, or immediately seek employment even when they have not obtained the necessary language skills needed to successfully retain long-term employment (Wayland, 2006). Higher earnings are associated with language proficiency in English (Wayland, 2006); however, nearly 73% of immigrants reported having a mother tongue other than English, and only 68.5% of new immigrants were able to access employment compared to 82% of the Canadian born population (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Although an initial language placement assessment for a language learner does capture some rudimentary information (i.e., years of education, home country and former occupation) as an approach to gaining a more holistic perspective of a newcomer's prior knowledge (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020), it does not represent the level of detail needed to capture a person's true skills and ability. Likewise, the content and means of ESL delivery do not always address prior learning since Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians (LINC) resources are used as a national guideline for individual language providers to use at their discretion (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). This is often a result of trying to fast-track individuals into the Canadian labour market, even though the intent of the federal and provincial funding grants is to provide language-learning, settlement, and employment skill opportunities. Instead, the funders and organizations support newcomers to gain access into menial "survival jobs" that are often unrelated to their prior learning in their home country (Kosny et al., 2020). These individuals then live and work in Canada and many become citizens without the ability to truly engage as integrated citizens as noted by the Canadian Index for Measuring Integration (CIMI, 2017).

The CIMI (2017) has divided integration into four streams that directly influence a person's ability to integrate. These four areas have been compiled through research initiatives,

they are: "economic (income and labour-force participation), social (a sense of belonging, social networks and life satisfaction), civic and democratic participation (voting and volunteering), and health (health access and quality of life)" (CIMI, 2017, p. 5). These categories do not take into consideration the support needed to guide new immigrants into adapting into Canadian society; instead, they focus on assimilating newcomers into the socially created structures of the dominant clusters' ideologies (Guo, 2013).

Statement of Inquiry and Research Questions

The current settlement process does not include newcomers' perspectives and does not ask or support their voices to challenge cultural norms. Despite efforts for educators and post-secondary institutions to become more inclusive and diverse, the customary practice is to teach content that is "ethnocentric, ahistorical, depoliticized, paternalistic, salvationist and triumphalist approaches that tend to deficit theorize, pathologize or trivialize difference" (Andreotti & Souza, 2011, p. 1). To ensure that the voices of all groups of people are represented fairly and equitably, marginalized groups need to be aware of their position in society and to have a participatory voice in their communities (Johnson, 2018). This requires language learning that incorporates global citizenship values and that educates newcomers to become informed citizens who understand and question oppressive social and economic conditions (Nesbit et al., 2013). I have conducted a literature review to inform strategies that can be used to engage newcomers in developing a sense of agency as they develop their language skills to integrate into Canadian life, community, and work culture.

My inquiry focuses on how ESL funded programming that is attuned to adult education for the economy can develop and include content that is of more relevance and use to newcomers as they become integrated in Canadian communities and employment streams. This research

includes an understanding of how global citizenship education and transformative learning can contribute to and support newcomers to become critically thoughtful and actively engaged citizens. Further sub questions that guided my inquiry include:

- How are newcomers being educated to become actively engaged participatory citizens?

- What can be done to develop newcomer social networks and volunteerism?

- What can be done to identify the hidden barriers that newcomer populations face to provide means of supporting them to become active/ informed citizens?

Theoretical Framework

The focus of my capstone inquiry was to determine what role ESL education has in integrating newcomers into Canadian society. I am concerned with social justice and have chosen critical theory to question dominant ideologies with a focus on connecting aspects of active citizenship and transformative learning theory to newcomers' individual experiences in ESL education and the broader social conditions (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Jurkova and Guo (2018) emphasized how current practices for settlement and language training lack transformative critical learning initiatives that support and facilitate permanent residence and refugees to became engaged citizens. These practices also do not consider whether the information relayed is relevant and of value for a learner, or if it transcends language learning to ameliorate and improve a person's quality of life (Bilodeau et al., 2020).

The ontological view for this research is associated with the critical paradigm. My assumption is that although people create their own realities in the social world, not everyone has equal, equitable access to education and social services that would provide them with the knowledge necessary to make better informed decisions to improve their lives. The intent of the

research was to determine ways to change newcomers' lives (Mack, 2010) by incorporating transformative learning as an approach to support genuine integration. My epistemology is in line with critical theory where my understanding of people creating knowledge and learning is influenced by power relations, "recognizing ideological manipulation and hegemony, and practicing democracy" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 228).

This topic is relevant to my current profession working with adult newcomers in ESL that has circumscribed content. The program I work within is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the curriculum is derived from the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program that focuses mostly on education for settlement and lacks a participatory citizenship perspective. This supported notion of settlement is vague and according to the Government of Canada (2019), "refers to a short period of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and the host society, during which the government provides support and services to newcomers" (para. 6). In contrast, this concept of human capital is not a new concept and is one that is utilized in many publicly funded initiatives, such as the Canadian Government's express entry Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS). This is a merit system that assigns points that equate to an applicant's value for the Canadian economy (Carey, 2018).

Education and citizenship are intertwined and so is the need to distinguish the relevance of formal and informal education that is essential for immigrants to integrate into Canadian society in a fair and equitable manner (Peters et al., 2019). This includes empowering newcomer adults to participate in decisions concerning their lives, including the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental conditions in which they live. IRCC's most recent national language evaluation noted that, "the guidelines [for LINC] are organized into twelve settlement-related themes and offer ideas for teaching language[; however] the guidelines do not prescribe syllabus

content or mandatory components" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020, p. 22). ESL curricula is largely carried out by white adult educators who prescribe how different ethnic minorities should adapt to and adopt Canadian cultural standards. Chatterjee (2019) documented how a skill-based language class involved "a cascade of proscriptions" as the instructors attempt to educate newcomers in how to least offend Canadians in the workplace, which included informing newcomers "[to not] show up smelling like foods that are foreign to us," "don't wear a shalwar cameeze," "change your name if it is hard to pronounce," and "don't wear a hijab if you want to get a job" (p.7). This is contrary to the guidelines provided to IRCC funded language providers, but the vagueness and lack of mandatory content could be contributing factors as to why this occurs.

Critical theory underpins this research, and it can help address these concerns by questioning the normalized assumptions and develop a means for newcomers to develop a sense of self through transformative learning. The critical theoretical framework in that it helps support the need for a critical lens to be used that is empathetic to newcomer perspectives especially in understanding the power relations and hegemonic ideologies that attribute to the barriers newcomers in integrating and becoming participatory citizens.

Methodology and Methods

My research methodology was based on critical theory and incorporates a social justice lens in support of active citizenship and transformative learning. The goal for conducting this research was to be able to provide evidence that would support proposed new content to be integrated into curriculum that responsibly connects newcomers to community and employment with a common purpose (Astin, 2001). I was also interested in seeing how critical theory and transformative learning theory can be used to help navigate the political and economic views that

influence curriculum and teaching (Mack, 2010, p. 9). Additionally, the research findings

highlight the challenges of developing relevant curriculum content that supports newcome

empowerment.

In my literature analysis, I incorporate a critical theory lens that focuses on the social

norms that impact both ESL language programs and the newcomers who are impacted by their

curricula and service provision. This has been done to "advocate for changing material practices

that keep us confined to raced, classed and gendered social relations" (Spencer & Lange, 2014,

p. 81). This review considered literature on ESL teaching, settlement education, and policy and

practice in funded programming that is relevant and current. The majority of literature was from

the last 5–7 years with some from the last decade and older literature included that addresses

specific points. A number of different databases were used to search for literature including

ProQuest and EBSCO HOST and also Google Scholar. The search terms and key words

included: ESL and social justice in Canada, transformative learning in ESL, ESL participatory

citizens, current immigration policies in Canada.

De Capua (2019) demonstrated the value of incorporating active citizenship and

transformational learning in programs designed to integrate immigrants and displaced persons

has also been considered. In addition, concepts related to adult newcomer integration, and ESL

curricula that supports newcomers becoming more engaged in and inquisitive about their socio-

cultural and economic status in Canada, were examined. This aligns with one of the aims of this

study, which was to provide evidence for future implementation of ideas through the theoretical

framework of critical theory.

I have explored the critical skills needed for integration that would differentiate the

current curricula for settlement which support topics and themes that do not transform a person's

life, but instead encourage people to fit within the comforts of the standard parameters and norms created by the educational framework, the instructors, the college, and the funders. Literature in which authors discussed and defined the difference between teaching language for settlement and teaching language with critical skills that support integration with global citizenship perspectives have been examined, for example Guo's (2013) research on language policies in Canada and their influence on language programs.

Researcher's Role and Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this academic review are in relation to bias, limitations of critical theory, and obtaining a reasonable selection of research that both challenged and supported the project, but did not deviate from the intended ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods. Mack (2010) noted that critical theory has been criticized as being used as an excuse to save people. This remains as a good reminder as a researcher, that I need to be cognizant not to take on problems or place my preferences on others. Instead, I need to observe and look for solutions.

As the researcher, I have an inside perspective through my work in ESL for adult newcomers in a federally-funded program at a college in Manitoba, Canada. Organizations such as mine make assumptions about what people need and want in their lives based on newcomer's language proficiency (or lack of), and knowledge of Canadian culture which further creates a distinction between power and privilege. I am also aware that the use of critical theory, transformative learning theory, and a social justice lens will influence the articles I have chosen, which may interfere with a good research outcome. To offset this high-level bias, I have incorporated "bracketing" as noted by Tufford and Newman (2012) for insight into my biasness and to highlight my perspectives.

Literature Review and Critique

In this review, I discuss neo-liberal trends in Canadian settlement and ESL education within the larger context of critical theory with the purpose of drawing attention to current issues that affect newcomer integration to find plausible solutions. While a predominant amount of literature currently examines the provincial and federal ESL funding opportunities and highlights Canadian policies on immigration and refugee settlement trends, this research was aimed at understanding the relevance of the ESL language classes on newcomer integration. This is particularly relevant considering that in 2016 newcomers accounted for around 21% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2017), and according to the Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (2019), immigrants made up 24% of Canada's workforce even though less than 30% reported English or French as a first language (Statistics Canada, 2017).

This review is divided into three sections. In the first section, I examine literature that uses a critical approach to examine the socio-economic influences of immigration and ESL programming. The second section is an exploration of social- emancipatory transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991) in relation to ESL programming. In the third section, I discuss democracy as it relates to social justice in immigrant adaptation and integration; here, a subsection highlights the active citizenship perspectives and the impact of community and belonging for integration. This literature review has been conducted to provide insights on the prevailing issues that encumber adult English language learners (ELLs) from becoming active participatory citizens with meaningful employment in similar professions in Canada. The themes identified in this study relate to immigration policies, learning perspectives, newcomer empowerment, and multiculturism.

Socio-Economic Issues Relating to Current ESL Programs

A critical approach requires that we consider the wider issues that involve policy and economic influences in relation to newcomer integration and how the connections between funding and legislative policies impact skilled immigrants. For example, in their extensive research on international migration and integration in the Canadian context, Kosny et al. (2020) discussed how current socio-political views directly impact the financial security of language providers and settlement agencies in their provision for integrating newcomers across Canada. This is found especially in instances when the funder provides heavily monitored contractual obligations set by government priorities to be evaluated to meet target outcomes and outputs (Kosny et al., 2020). This most notably occurs when language service providers and settlement agencies receive federal government funds through IRCC (Guo, 2013).

In order to measure and describe language skills, the federal government established the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) that includes 12 levels in the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Guo, 2013). The funding agreements then support the design and implementation of programming that align with Portfolio Based Language Assessments (PBLA) and the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) framework (Kosny et al., 2020). Chatterjee (2019) recognized that these constructs have all been developed as an approach that aligns with Canada's skilled-based immigration policy which focuses on labour-market integration. Chatterjee (2019) also observed that "the 2016 census reported continuing labour-market marginalization" (p. 2). The common ground between public funding and the integration of newcomers are the identified labour market gaps, and the need for skilled workers to fill these vacancies (Kosny et al., 2020). In a study conducted for the Peter A. Allard School of Law at the University of British Columbia, Kaushal (2019) presented findings from Statistics Canada (2015)

that identified, on average, 50% of the 300,000 new immigrants per annum are skilled workers

(p. 86). Chatterjee (2019) and Fang et al. (2018) also have recognized the necessity for skilled

immigrants to access employment soon after arrival, and the need for language providers,

employers, and settlement agencies to refer skilled immigrants for retraining and upskilling

(Chatterjee, 2019).

Despite a shift from a knowledge-based economy to one that is focused on skills and

human capital, Guo (2019) highlighted the fact that many internationally trained professionals

are not as equally recognized in Canada once they arrive, which often leads to lower wages, and

job insecurities. Guo further described these obstacles as being a part of the triple glass effect,

which includes, "a glass gate, glass door, and glass ceiling" (p. 2), which is a means of

describing the multiple structural barriers that affect immigrants' lives at different stages of their

integration and transition processes. There is consensus between Guo (2015, 2019) and

Chatterjee (2019) in that Canada's knowledge-based economy corroborates social constructs that

view immigrants as deficient, even though migration policies are rooted in adult education with a

preference for immigrant professionals over other applicants on the assumption that these more

educated individuals will lead to greater human capital. Moreover, this does not explain why

internationally educated immigrants experience contradictions in policy that provide

opportunities for skilled newcomers to come to Canada, and then deskill and devaluate their

qualifications and work experience after their arrival (Chatterjee, 2019; George & Selimos, 2019;

Guo, 2015).

Kaushal (2019) made a poignant note that Canada's supply-driven human capital

immigration model has shifted to one that is neo-corporatist, intertwining the standard point

system of human capital criteria related to language, education, and occupational demand with

one of that combines community and the economy. Though Kaushal's focus on immigration and

the labour market is substantial, it does not consider the systemic and racial implications that

hinder internationally trained newcomers in acquiring work related to their intended occupations.

Instead, it reveals an important point in how by intentionally endorsing and accepting a racial

hierarchy, we as a society design our economic, political, and social systems to be racist,

whereby our fastidious demand for Canadian work experience and certification has become an

indicator of racism (Kosny et al., 2020; Pak, 2021). Many authors including Chatterjee (2019)

and Kosny et al. (2020) have discussed obstacles for newcomer integration that are often linked

to the hegemonic discourse that favours local work experience and training. They argued that

this creates policies and accessibility to employment that are arduousness for a newcomer to

navigate and have the ability to impact how a newcomer will meet their employment and

integration goals in Canadian society.

Socio-political movements, constraints, and economic motives have shifted ESL

programming from endorsing community ownership to neo-liberal, top-down, rigorous funding

approaches (Guo, 2013). Authors have highlighted that more often than not, skilled newcomers

are placed in a systemic cycle where integration and inclusion are placed out of reach with a

clear link between the human capital, neo-corporatist models for settlement and the meritocratic

systems (Chatterjee, 2019; Kosny et al., 2020). Inversely, these authors did not mention where

the responsibility lies for Canada's employers, schools, and social systems. This is further

supported by issues relating to a multicultural nation that relies on skilled workers to fill labour

market gaps, taking responsibility on levelling the uneven social systems (Chatterjee, 2019;

Kaushal ,2019; Kosny, 2019; Pak, 2019). "These cultural dimensions are also reproduced

through immigration policies that award points to a Canadian experience class of immigrants

(skilled workers and students). *Canadian experience* is, however, determined by a range of qualities, a 'European cultural habitus'" (Chatterjee, 2015, as cited in George & Selimos, 2019, p. 128). Schmidtke (2019) identified the multilevel governance approach that has addressed the immigration policies to create more effective welcoming communities in four distinct ways: (a) through more even distribution of immigrants across the nation (including small centres and smaller cities); (b) by decentralizing settlement from larger cities to include small centres in rural areas as a means of expanding diversification in an attempt to develop inclusion in the workforce; and (c) by the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which was first introduced in Manitoba in 1998 (Schmidtke, 2019, p. 33).

The PNP program is a means for fast-tracking immigrants who meet the specific provincial requirements. The program has largely been successful at providing settlement strategies that meet local labour market needs, with the focus of "socio-economic utility becoming the guiding principle for the selection process" (Schmidtke, 2019, p. 34). However, one drawback to the PNP model has been that of newcomer retention, which relates to Schmidtke's fourth point (d) the need for communities to establish alliances to develop and coordinate diversity and inclusion frameworks (p. 35). Further investigation found a counter argument from Kaushal (2019) that this model of express entry and PNP "change[s] the relationship between the economy and community, moving us further toward an immigration model of people as economic market outputs and further away from people as political and social members in a national community" (p. 87).

Transformative Learning in ESL Programming

Freire (2005) likened the concept of traditional education to that of banking where those with knowledge would fill up the minds of those with nothing. In particular, Freire believed that

a passive form of education deprived the learner of discovering their own purpose and further reminded the student of their oppressed position in society. Several authors including Chatterjee (2019), Kosny et al. (2020), and Liu (2015) observed that deskilling and retraining perpetuated newcomer marginalization and overlooked the need for immigrants to be provided with knowledge to develop critical thinking skills and awareness of policies, to ask questions, and challenge assumptions. This is consistent with Jurkova and Guo (2018) who stated that the foundational concepts of transformative learning, "the idea of continuum and interconnection of knowledge, skills and attitudes as an ongoing process of inquiry, thinking, reflecting, and acting." (p. 173) can be applied to community integrated experiences that engages adults to develop social identity and a sense of belonging.

DeCapua et al.'s (2018) empirical research with transformative learning and ESL instruction demonstrates how reflective practice provides ESL instructors with the opportunity to discover their own preconceived notions and cultural assumptions as it relates to their teaching practices with adult newcomer learners. The guiding principles used in the research were consistent with Jurkova and Guo (2018), where Mezirow's concepts of transformative learning was highlighted and its role in developing instructors' perception in who they are as adult educators, while developing insight into professional growth as lifelong learners. In DeCapua et al.'s (2018) research, mentorship, and critical reflection were the primary methods used to guide instructors to question and discover skills and strategies. Transformative learning was described by both DeCapua et al. (2018), and Jurkova and Guo (2018) as a method to identify, challenge, and transform personal cultural beliefs and intersectionality as they relate to the specific roles a person holds in the world. Similarly, Jurkova and Guo noted the benefit of using transformative learning with educators is that it carries over into the classroom and helps support "[educators

and learners as] collaborators of knowledge and co-learners instead of being labeled as experts and non-experts divided by power and authority" (p. 184).

The research cited above differs slightly from Fang et al.'s (2018) examination of how immigrant language learners build on their capacity to become informed citizens. Their research explored how refugee newcomers integrate in smaller communities in Canada and addressed how social networks and English language skills are viewed as the skills necessary to access meaningful employment. Fang et al. (2018) also emphasized how language skills acquisition cannot compete against labour market discrimination and suggested the need for newcomers and local community members to connect through community initiatives (e.g., volunteering and community activities). This is consistent with Kosny et al.'s (2020) research on the obstacles that immigrants experience in volunteering, mentoring and job placements. These opportunities are usually not within the immigrant's professional field; they require manual work, usually have poor working conditions with minimal pay. Moreover, work found through social connections are often in a newcomer's language and can lead to exploitation through low-wage allocations. Kosny et al. (2020) further explored how preparing newcomers to become self-advocates by creating safe spaces for open dialogue helps determine their gaps in knowledge about personal safety and their rights. They recommended English language programming that covers a range of topics related to employment and rights and responsibilities to empower newcomers; this is a more citizenship-orientated approach.

The use of a transcultural teaching approach with adult learners was proposed by Jurkova and Guo (2018) since this model incorporates a teaching style that is both inclusive and follows transformative learning principles. Although transcultural learning encompasses many similar aspects to transformative learning, one of its unique qualities is the way it views the student and

teacher interactions. This approach not only views reflective practice as a skill to be used by both

the instructor and the students to raise awareness and create reasonable, attainable goals, but it

further defines the role of the instructor as that of a co-learner, rather than a gatekeeper of

knowledge. It is also inclusive of the learner's views and helps support the learner identifying

their positioning and oppression in their lives. This model further acknowledges the learner

(student) as someone who also has skills and abilities (prior knowledge and learning) that can be

shared as a means of learning for the co-learner (instructor). This results in a shift in power

dynamics between the learner (student) and the co-learner (teacher), which allows for

collaborative dialogue, reflection, and action to occur without the added dimension of power

(Jurkova & Guo, 2019).

DeCapua et al's (2018) research relates the transcultural approach to a teaching method

they have devised. The mutually adaptive learning paradigm (MALP) supports students with

limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) by blending reflective practice and awareness

that SILFE students may be illiterate in their home language and may have acquired knowledge,

skills, and experience in more informal settings. This contrasts with newcomers who would have

gained skills in formal education settings, and who would be familiar with academic ways of

viewing, navigating and interpreting their world, which would be similar to that of the ESL

instructor (DeCapua et al., 2018).

The pedagogical approach of MALP highlights the need for instructors to reflect on their

own teaching styles and encourages instructors to view their teaching approaches. De Capua et

al.'s (2018) qualitative research focused on one instructor's adaptation of her teaching style in a

low-level literacy ESL class, where the instructor followed the training and implementation of

MALP. The findings show how the instructor used a teacher-centred approach to engage students

in question and answer (formal education) routine instructions that did not evoke critical thought or student engagement; instead, it models the traditional initiation–response–evaluation (IRE) approach to teaching that is teacher-dominated and not culturally responsive (DeCapua et al., 2018). A culturally responsive approach allows for more student-centred and student-led learning, which is more predominantly connected to speaking rather than writing skills and avoids assuming that all the learners would know how to navigate and deconstruct formal education related tasks such as following a chart, writing a list, navigating a textbook, and responding to open-ended questions. Guo (2013) made the argument that "the ESL programs, focusing on teaching Canadian values, have failed to integrate cultural difference and diversity into language education. On the contrary; the programs have become a vehicle to assimilating immigrants into the norms of the dominant culture" (p. 37). Furthermore, the LINC curricula provides immigrants language skills for daily life (Guo, 2013), but lacks curriculum with strategic competencies to help a person advocate for their own rights and freedoms within a democratic society. The lack of knowledge about opportunity, freedoms, power, and oppression leads newcomers to co-dependent relationships with their ethnic communities and vulnerable to misinformation, mistrust and as mentioned previously, "exploitation" (Brown, 2018; Kosny et al., 2020).

Social Justice as it Relates to Adaptation and Integration

Although at first glance the IRCC-funded English language learning (ELL) opportunities endorse integration, Guo (2013) has argued that what is taught aligns more with assimilation where the key focus is on teaching Canadian values for immigrants to adapt to Canadian life. The opportunities for integration could be afforded through the inclusion of critical theory and transformative learning in ESL curricula through the adoption of a multicultural approach that is

inclusive of diverse populations represented fairly and equitably. Social justice and citizenship

education focus on the rights and values of individual members of society and the need for sense

of belonging in the greater community (Arthur et al., 2012). A number of scholars have

identified three types of citizens: (a) those who are personally responsible, where in this case the

people follow public authority; (b) a participatory citizen who supports causes that help others,

and (c) a justice-seeking citizen who questions the injustices of the world for change (Andreotti,

2006, as cited in Brown, 2018, p. 84; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It is difficult, however, to

ascertain how a newcomer to Canada would develop insight into any of these types of citizens

without knowledge of these approaches to living and participating in the community.

Bilodeau et al. (2020) noted the relevance of developing inclusive environments in

establishing immigrant retention and integration in provincial communities. Their research

included a mixed method approach that incorporated empirical findings and an analysis of

qualitative data collected on newcomer visible minority groups and how a sense of belonging

increased participatory and justice seeking citizenship. The literature of George and Selimos

(2019) discussed the many considerations that influence a newcomer's willingness to become

actively engaged in democracy and highlighted that two of the major contributing factors are a

sense of attachment and acceptance. George and Selimos (2019) and Fang et al. (2018)

emphasized that both factors are connected to inclusion in the community, and that the feelings

of attachment are ones felt from the newcomer toward the community and the feelings of

acceptance are what is felt by the community toward the newcomer. Both influence a

newcomer's desire to integrate into a community, and without acceptance from the community it

is difficult for a newcomer to develop a vested interest in being a citizen of any kind within that

community (Bilodeau et al., 2020).

Offering a different perspective from that of Bilodeau et al. (2020), George and Selimos (2019) discussed issues with the assumption that belonging equates to integration. Their view of integration is more complex and multi-dimensional, seeing a newcomer's journey to integration in ebbs and flows of social inclusion and exclusion. They explored how the complexities and struggles of finding social and work identities impact a newcomer's sense of belonging (George & Selimos, 2019). George and Selimos's research depicts the usual struggles for newcomers, especially skilled workers, in their quest to find meaningful, relevant employment; however, they also noted the strategies new immigrants use to find meaningful lives. The strategies that George and Selimos described are numerous and are related to, developing broader social networks, flexible mindsets, practicing democracy, and identifying their positions in society. They further explored the systemic barriers and obstacles that newcomers face to obtain a sense of agency and inclusion in Canada. A need for pro-active efforts to be made to breakdown the divide between long term mainstream Canadian residents and newcomers—including skilled workers and refugees—was also highlighted.

Likewise, Fang et al. (2018) attested that the relationship between newcomer retention is greater in ethno-cultural communities and when immigrants are matched with jobs related to their education and skills. This is further supported by literature by Guo (2013) and Kosny et al. (2020) that emphasized that acquiring English language skills is not enough to help support students navigating systemic and cultural barriers to accessing employment. It further highlights the need for immigrants to develop strategies and critical awareness of how to identify the unjust social situations or circumstances, so as to be able to voice their concerns to address their issues to overcome oppression (Guo, 2013).

Citizenship as it Relates to Immigrant Integration

Active and informed citizenship has been discussed through the previous sections. Authors such as Kaushal et al. (2019) and Guo (2013) highlighted the shift in immigration trends the impact that it has had nationally on the types of newcomers arriving in Canada through different streams driven by economic and workforce needs. This form of citizenship implies participatory citizenship whereby the newcomer has greater involvement and awareness of democratic practices and local governance (Brown, 2018). It entails that an individual has enough knowledge and awareness of socio-political systems to make educated and informed decisions about matters that affect them to greater society. Exploring some of the literature that relates to social justice and ESL includes global citizenship perspectives that endorse the need for further development in areas related to social justice that provide a newcomer and their host communities with shared perspectives (Brown, 2018; Fang et al., 2018).

Brown (2018) supported the need for newcomers to have greater involvement in community to develop and broaden social networks with the goal for individuals to gain a sense of agency. However, Brown and Kosny et al. (2020) also contested that empowerment cannot be obtained through work integrated learning alone and addresses the need the need for informal learning opportunities through a myriad of different delivery models (i.e., seminars, films, workshops, and groups). For example, Brown's research focused on informal learning venues of relevant and useful topics related to global citizenship (i.e., social networking, diversity, human rights, lifestyle, and consumer choices) that provide insight and equip newcomers to become change agents. There is consensus between Brown (2018) and George and Selimos (2019) who supported placing the newcomer at the centre to develop an understanding of their struggles and

barriers to work with the newcomer's experience instead of the assumptions made for the newcomer.

Findings and Discussion

This study focused on the current state of funded ESL programming that interconnects with adult education for the economy and its relevance to supporting the integration and long-term settlement of adult newcomers (permanent residents and refugees). The key findings of the research demonstrate how ESL programming that focuses primarily on settlement tasks such as, for example, buying groceries and going to the post office, is not effective in addressing the necessary language components that relate to employment, which are needed to integrate skilled newcomers and refugees into the labour market. The research provides insight into different approaches and models of instruction that could be incorporated to develop content that is more relevant and useful to the current demographic of skilled newcomers and refugees. The literature review provided awareness of the numbers of skilled immigrants that arrive on average per annum to fill labour gaps (Kaushal, 2019). The literature findings indicate the need for ESL programming to incorporate more relevant content that offers a greater emphasis on teaching the necessary strategic competencies, critical awareness, and socio-linguistic knowledge needed to navigate the challenges of intercultural communication in workplaces and communities (Guo, 2013; Guo, 2015).

The literature suggests that current neo-corporatist immigration is largely driven to fill employment gaps across Canada, and this necessity for skilled workers then further propels the need for ESL programming that is relevant and aligned to current immigrant policies and trends. However, the findings speculate that the current CLB theoretical framework for ESL programming has largely been used to inform language instruction that supports language

outcomes related to daily routines and for immigrants to obtain citizenship (Guo, 2013). A

plausible explanation for ESL curricula being settlement-focused is that the programming is

outdated and does not align with the skill sets being demanded of newcomer applicants through

current immigration policy. Since Canada's incorporation of hybrid neo-corporatist immigration

policy, the skilled workers who are being invited to Canada today are arriving with much greater

language skills and education than in past years (i.e., on average CLB/NCLC 7) (Manitoba

Labour and Immigration, 2021). This data contributes to a clearer understanding of how, for

many skilled newcomers, language is often not the barrier, but rather the knowledge needed to be

actively engaged participatory citizens is what is absent (Guo, 2015). The practical implications

of these findings can be used to develop insight into reshaping and redeveloping ESL curricula

that helps support newcomers receiving opportunities to become exposed to work environments

and adult social situations (i.e., fundraising, elevator pitches, job interviews) (Guo, 2015; Kosny

et al., 2019).

One of the challenges of developing newcomer social networks through volunteerism is

that low level language learners (i.e., those at Foundations to CLB 4/NCLC 4) would not have

the language skills to safely navigate an unfamiliar work or social setting (Fang et al., 2018;

Kosny et al., 2019). This challenge provides insight in the possibilities of developing mentorship,

job-shadowing, or apprenticeship opportunities for these newcomers (often refugees) to develop

their language and strategic competencies in similar environments, but with more assistance

(DeCapua et al., 2018). An unanticipated obstacle would be the ability to identify the barriers

that exist for newcomers when obtaining work or navigating more complex social interactions

such as discrimination, knowledge of rights, policies, and workplace safety. If a newcomer is not

able to identify the barriers or provide realistic solutions, it will be difficult for them to overcome these obstacles and voice their concerns (Kosny et al., 2019).

It is beyond the scope of this study to know all of the larger implications that newcomers may face in work integrated learning opportunities. However, the literature highlighted that one of the means of addressing these issues largely lies with the learner, and by providing a newcomer with the necessary critical analytic skills, they will have a greater chance of being able to know how to approach the challenges that do arise (Guo, 2019; Kosny et al., 2020). Further research is also needed that addresses the implications of newcomers obtaining citizenship prior to obtaining the language and skills needed to become actively participatory citizens, and how this affects their long-term integration since IRCC policy does not fund citizens.

The implications for integration and participatory citizenship are part of a larger systemic problem, whereby the responsibility for acquiring insight into Canadian work and community cultures for integration largely lies on the newcomer, and not on the employer. Employers have not been expected or requested to become more aware of ethnocultural communities and are often ill equipped with skills to navigate cross-cultural communication, and lack policies that define and follow equitable, diverse, and equal work environments (Guo, 2015). SPOs are then left in a precarious position, since they are funded to help and support newcomers in accessing the skills needed to settle, attain, and retain meaningful work. Even in instances where a skilled immigrant has been matched with their area of skill, SPOs often receive rebut from employers that the newcomer is not an ideal fit due to several factors that include race, ethnicity, gender, foreign accent, foreign credentials (Guo, 2015; Kosny et al., 2020; Pak, 2021).

To resolve the concerns that my review of the literature has highlighted and that have been discussed above, I propose a student-centred approach to ESL curricula that focuses on the

individual's strengths and looks to provide the learner with the resources and insight to navigate their new social surroundings. The skilled newcomer should not be expected to re-learn hard skills that they have acquired in their home countries since they are in Canada based on their language skills and credentials. Immigrants need to be provided with meaningful and relevant content that relates to their safety and security in Canadian social and employment circles, such as that exemplified by Brown (2018) for skilled workers and DeCapua et al.'s (2019) MALP for literacy learners. Both models exemplify a method of delivering relevant content in English that promotes critical analysis and reflective practice. The models also incorporate a means for individuals to gain motivation and become inquisitive and reflective of their position in society to help support independence in accessing information.

By promoting an individual's ability to build connections in their host communities, newcomers can develop relationships outside of those solely connected to their culture (Kosny et al., 2020). Guided facilitation of informal discussion groups based on topics of interest and relevance, allows people to discuss, reflect and act based on the individuals needs and use for the information (Brown, 2018). This is a different approach from the standard LINC settlement curriculum since it sees the learner as an equal contributor with the ability to analyze, critique, and offer insight into the information that has been shared.

A global citizenship approach that seeks a person's perspective and looks for answers in how newcomers are included or excluded in society (George & Selimos, 2019) provides value and interest for ESL instructors and students alike. This student-guided approach to learning and knowing would also help promote a sense of being and belonging (Fang et al., 2020). Additionally, the dialogue and communication that is created by the newcomer helps small incremental changes to occur to break down obstacles and develop awareness of the behaviour

and policies in place within communities and workplaces that do not promote inclusivity for newcomers.

Conclusion

For my capstone inquiry, I examined the use of ESL programming as a means for newcomers (permanent residents and refugees) to integrate into Canadian social and employment networks and the broader challenges that immigrants face in attaining inclusion in building meaningful lives. While ESL is a tool to facilitate the integration process, it does not consider the systemic barriers that newcomers face, and the need for them to develop a sense of agency. The above discussion has made it clear that there is a need for a shift to occur in ESL programming that better facilitates the integration process working alongside Canada's current immigration policies. The divide of the "us versus them" approach to seeing newcomers as foreigners and not soon to be fellow Canadian does not support a multicultural inclusive nation. This partisan view makes it difficult to truly integrate newcomers and offer the opportunity for a life where they can be participatory citizens who make informed and effective choices for their lives. Language education could support and influence newcomers to build connections to enhance and overcome racial and discriminatory barriers. Language providing agencies cannot empower newcomers without placing the newcomer's perspectives and obstacles at the core of their programming.

One approach language education programs can take is to recognize and acknowledge the reasons newcomers have been invited to settle in Canada. With the funding from the federal government, different informal language training opportunities could be developed. These different language programs could be developed to enhance newcomer awareness, engage them in understanding and allow them options to take actions in their workplaces and communities. The transformative learning helps the student develop reflective thought and analysis of their

employment and language goals as it relates to their position in Canada. This then helps newcomers to independently navigate their work and social networks with the appropriate knowledge and resources gained from their enhanced ESL classes. This model would allow for groups to meet as an outlet to discuss concerns that are then addressed as a group or through workshops and other delivery methods, such as "experiential and project-based learning" as noted by Gibson et al., 2018 (as cited in Brown, 2018).

By developing CLB programming that is more agile in incorporating collaborative working relationships with exterior stakeholders (business sectors and community), as well as focuses on the students' needs can provide a means for greater collaboration with businesses and community. However, there is little evidence that PBLA would support or align with this type of language education since the content and outcomes of the new curriculum would focus on employment skills instead of the specific language outcomes (skill-using and assessments) that PBLA was initially intended to capture. Further research would need to be done to establish ways in which the current PBLA model could be adapted to meet employment skills outcomes.

Significance of the Research

This capstone inquiry was conducted to establish the relevance of ESL education for newcomers as it is currently presented as a means for settlement for participatory citizenship and workplace integration. It was conducted with the intent of identifying research to inform the recommendations for future ESL curriculum for newcomer settlement that empowers individuals and foster a sense of purpose and meaning in their integration process. The aspiration for conducting this research was to identify actionable strategies that through a collaborative process would facilitate the growth and success of newcomers shifting from top-down institutional models to cooperative and student led initiatives. Of the total newcomer population, around 6%

will enter Manitoba (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2015, n. p.), with most of the new

migrants needing skills and language to access employment. This results in many looking to

access language classes. The findings will help identify and support further research initiatives

and funding opportunities to support newcomers to Manitoba. The emphasis is to promote

newcomers being able to make decisions about their language learning. The goal is to enable

them to become active participatory citizens in their communities and gain meaningful

employment that does not focus solely on workplace training, or on language benchmarks, but

rather develops critical thinking skills and empowers people to discover a sense of their position

and purpose in greater society.

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