

DR. STIRLING MCDOWELL
Foundation
FOR
RESEARCH INTO TEACHING



TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH EXCHANGE

From Fabric to Quilt:
Adaptability in Teaching
EAL Students

From a Classroom
Teacher's Perspective

Margaret Symon-Lungal

Project #183
June 2010

This research was partially funded through a grant from the McDowell Foundation. However, the points of view and opinions expressed in project documents are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

The purpose of the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching is to fund research, inquiry and dissemination of information focusing on instruction (both teaching and learning) in the context of the public elementary and secondary education system. Specifically, it will:

- 1) Contribute to knowledge about teaching and learning.
- 2) Encourage educational inquiry through a wide range of methodologies.
- 3) Support the involvement of practising teachers in active research projects.
- 4) Encourage organizations as well as individuals to determine and act in areas of research and inquiry.
- 5) Encourage experimentation with innovative ideas and methodologies related to teaching and learning.

The Foundation is an independent charitable organization formed by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in 1991. It is governed by a Board of Directors with the assistance of an Advisory Committee of representatives from the educational and business communities. The selection and evaluation of projects funded by the Foundation is carried out by a teacher-led Project Review Committee. Inquiries concerning research supported by the McDowell Foundation may be directed to the following address:

Research Coordinator
Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation
2317 Arlington Avenue
Saskatoon SK S7J 2H8
Telephone: 1-800-667-7762 or 306-373-1660

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Acknowledgements	2
The Research Question: The Materials in a Quilt	5
A Patchwork of Pieces	6
Literature Review: Our Growing Mosaic in Saskatchewan	8
A Model of Effective Teaching: The Template	11
Methodology: Assembling the Quilt	12
The Rationale for Naturalistic Inquiry: Finding More Pieces	13
Participant Selection: The Stitches Become Stronger	14
Final Preparation: Out Into the Community, the Colourful Quilts Emerge	16
Presentation of Results: Basic Guidelines	17
Supportive Agencies	18
Building a Cultural Community: Walter’s Story	19
Gail’s Neighbourhood School Experiences	20
Larry’s Role With Students Beyond Borders Via Taxi	21
Brenda’s Pull-Out Taxi Children	22
Conclusions: The Fabric of Our Lives – We Are All One People	24
Future Research: The Strongest Quilt	27
Appendices	
Appendix A: Application Form for Permission to Conduct Research in Saskatoon Public Schools.....	29
Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Participant/Teacher	31
Appendix C: Letter of Consent for Release of Transcripts	33
Appendix D: Letter of Assent for Classroom Observation	34
Appendix E: Interview Questions for Audio Taping of EAL Teachers	35
Appendix F: ESL Levels: General Description for Grades 3 to 9	36
Appendix G: I am an ESL Student by Neil Horne	38

Figures

Figure 1: A Global Constructivist Approach, Based on the Definition of
Effective Teaching, March 2007 3

Figure 2: Countries of Origin for Students
Requiring EAL English Language Support 4

References 39

Multicultural Connections..... 41

Executive Summary

Using the metaphor of a quilt, I have had an opportunity to examine my teaching practices and methodologies as a mainstream classroom teacher in relation to EAL (English as an Additional Language) teachers directly involved in the instruction and English language development as support for culturally challenged students. I chose qualitative research using narrative inquiry and I used observations, interviews, field notes and dialogues with specialist EAL teachers. These four participant specialist teachers allowed me into their professional spaces. As a result, I have been able to expand my repertoire of instructional practices as a multilingual classroom teacher to begin to create my quilt. As students enter my classroom door, I am challenged on a daily basis to ensure that I am truly a culturally responsive teacher.

I have always loved the feel of pieces of fabric, and I love to sew. As the threads of my life took a few interesting turns, I gained experience in teaching swimming, teaching Core French in rural and urban environments and traveling to learn more French and Spanish. I am currently an experienced mainstream middle years classroom teacher with almost three decades of teaching experience. The pieces of my life are as varied as my favorite machine-stitched quilt, and my love of languages and traveling has enabled me to gain further appreciation for experiencing life in other cultural settings.

Our EAL students in our communities and in our classrooms have valuable personal experiences in their own cultures which they will assimilate into Canadian culture. As immigrants and refugees, their literacy levels will be very diverse. Our challenge as mainstream classroom teachers is to close the gap between their inability to communicate in the English language and our ability to teach and educate. These students need to be able to interpret information about their world without losing their cultural beliefs and values and to develop meaningful language experiences. The mainstream classroom teachers will need to scaffold students' knowledge and provide ongoing support to these EAL students for many years.

The four participant teachers were effective, culturally responsive teachers, implementing many diverse strategies with their language-supported students. Their students were whole-heartedly engaged in many activities. These teachers were teaching with their hearts, and it was inspiring to see their knowledge, adaptations, creativity and excellence in their delivery of an adapted curriculum.

Teachers need to be able to use diverse instructional methods to implement changes in the curriculum at every grade level to provide support to EAL students. Students, families and communities can become the threads which will eventually create a fabric, rich in design and texture, becoming a hand-made quilt reflective of our Canadian mosaic of individuals, which covers our lives and our hearts with warmth, meaning and understanding.

Acknowledgements

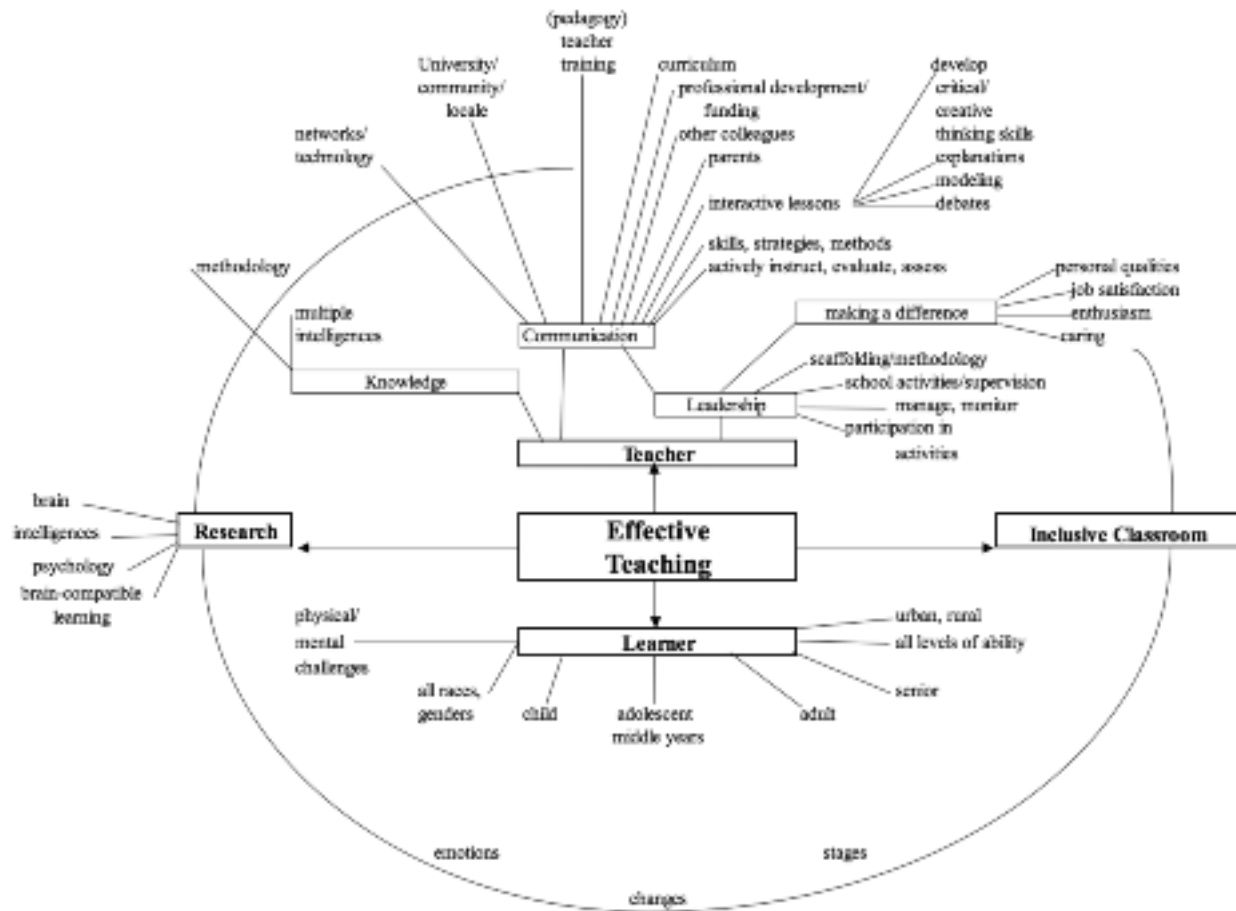
I would like to recognize the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching, which so generously decided to support my research project. This opportunity allowed me to gain further understanding related to the diversity of teaching methodology in relation to EAL students. In addition, I was able to fulfill the research requirements toward completing my thesis in the graduate program.

To Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, I am very appreciative of her ongoing encouragement, support and vast knowledge base. By challenging me and asking for clarity, analysis and depth, she has helped me to become the academic writer I always wanted to be.

To the four participant specialist EAL teachers who have their anonymity protected and respected, I am extremely grateful for their willingness to be part of my research and to allow me into their classrooms. Their expertise, creativity and caring are evident as they work with English language-challenged students on a daily basis, teaching from their minds and hearts.

And finally, to my immediate family, their support and love have been appreciated as they have encouraged me since this entire research process began more than three years ago.

Figure 1: A Global Constructivist Approach, Based on the Definition of Effective Teaching, March 2007



The research process of observing four participant EAL English language specialist teachers was facilitated through this diagram, as it formed the lens with which to make qualitative observations within the classrooms.

Figure 2: Countries of Origin for Students Requiring EAL English Language Support



The multilingual classroom is a reality in today's Canadian schools. Students literally come from the **four corners of the world**, creating a diversity and richness in our province. Teachers and schools are responding to the influx of new families to ensure that students become socially integrated into the life of the school and the community and experience academic success.

The Research Question: The Materials in a Quilt

The research question framing this study was: How could four teachers of pull-out EAL (English as an Additional Language) students inform my teaching practices? I designed a qualitative study to enroll four teachers as participants who were directly involved in the teaching of EAL classes.

With funded classroom release time, I was able to observe their teaching methodology with EAL students, who ranged in age from six to 14 years and attended grades one through eight, in four separate schools. Additionally, with the goal of learning about EAL teaching practices, I was also to interview the teachers regarding their experiences teaching EAL students and how they adapted instructional strategies to meet the needs of these students.

It was my intention to analyze the ways that these four teachers matched the pedagogical styles and organizational arrangements of literacy learning with immigrant children's language and cultural values. I also needed to record and analyze the school district's policies and resources available for classroom teachers to develop their proficiency in teaching children of limited English in the regular mainstream classroom. Furthermore, I wanted to be able to make suggestions to teachers and administrators in order to facilitate and foster further developments regarding the education of EAL students in school districts.

My ultimate goal was to synthesize the details, analyze the teaching methodologies for students requiring EAL English language support, and create a repertoire of skills and adaptations that would be effective for me so that I would become that culturally responsive and effective teacher.

As a researcher, I wanted to metaphorically use the terminology related to sewing and quilt making as a comparison to creating my multilingual classroom community each year. I am a very visual individual, and I have appreciated the beauty and variety of colours and patterns in my everyday world. Our classrooms are multilingual and diverse, allowing us the opportunity to work with students from many cultures. Each year has been an opportunity to create a different quilt with a stunning array of beautiful colours, shapes, patterns and designs.

A Patchwork of Pieces

Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry, and our lives are woven together for a reason or a season. Using the tools of the curriculum and my abilities as an educated individual, my students have been able to learn about their world and themselves in it through a changing, challenging and adaptive curriculum. Yet the classrooms of today in 2010 are inherently more complex than the classrooms of the 1980s when I naively began my career. The cultural diversity that exists in our classrooms today necessitates that teachers will adapt teaching methodology to strive to meet the academic and social needs of this multicultural group of students.

"One-Stop Immigrant Welcoming" (2009) indicated that "Saskatchewan is quickly becoming one of the most booming provinces in Canada, and the provincial government has been working hard to attract newcomers from other provinces and nations, aiming to welcome 10,000 new arrivals each year."

The federal government has made a concerted effort to increase immigration quotas that will fulfill an array of opportunities and investment needs. As families settle into prairie communities, questions arise about how the children of immigrants will succeed academically in school. As a mainstream classroom teacher, I am expected to provide an educational and social environment which will meet the needs of my diverse group of 30 students, seven of whom do not speak English as their first language.

Duffy (2005) stated:

... in a country that has embraced more than 3.3 million immigrants during the past 15 years, some clear and fundamental answers should be sought. How do ESL students fare when compared to other students? Are the ESL programs we have in place working? Are some better than others? Why? (p. 56)

When speaking with colleagues, it is becoming even more apparent that many mainstream classroom teachers have immigrant and/or refugee students in their schools. In my urban Grade 7 classroom of 30 students, I have at least one student from each country of Iran, Nigeria, Germany, Taiwan and China. Two additional students, also from China, require EAL support and have arrived in Canada just within the last few months. Within my school, almost 20 students require EAL English language support, integrated within their mainstream classroom instruction.

"A welcoming and inclusive multicultural school is one in which students and parents feel welcome, valued, and included" (Coelho, 2004, p.13).

As Coelho clearly stated, the challenge for mainstream classroom teachers will be to meet the diverse needs of these students, assisting with English language instruction as well as helping these students adjust to a new cultural and educational environment with the support of the designated EAL specialist teacher.

EAL is the term used in Saskatchewan school districts as a replacement term for ESL (English as a Second Language), giving greater credibility to the many students who come to Canada with more than two languages. These students come from a variety of countries in the world and receive instructional support for learning English in addition to their elementary/high school classroom/subject instruction. The students belong to one of two basic groups: immigrants or refugees. A third group could

include international students who arrive in Canada to study English and may remain as permanent residents.

The province of Saskatchewan, at present, is establishing criteria that will consistently be implemented when offering additional English language support to students. There is no Saskatchewan Curriculum for English as an Additional Language, and each school division develops their own English language support program. The access to information about EAL/ESL English language support programming is expanding rapidly as the demand for implementing relevant teaching strategies and curriculum content rises, and other supportive agencies become involved with families to assist in their settlement in communities.

I strongly agree with Ferst (2007) who stated “we must engage students in learning languages of the world. It is through language that one can begin to understand the culture” (p. 76). I needed to become familiar with the cultural experiences and language abilities of EAL students.

Cummins (1996, p. 58), who has studied language and literacy development extensively, has made an essential distinction between two different types of language mastery. His research and findings are highly recognized and accepted among most educators. From a major study in 1984, he thoroughly investigated theories and practices in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States regarding placement of immigrant students.

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BISC) is conversational language referring to fluency, understanding others and being understood. This is the basic survival language, learned within the first two years that students are placed in English immersion environments. In school children expand their ability to handle increasingly complex language as they use cues such as eye contact, facial expression and intonation. Picture books provide many images for children and, as the level of English difficulty increases, chapter books and subject textbooks no longer have visual images to assist in the comprehension of the material.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) refers to academic language, much more important in language acquisition, with a much higher level of subject content embedded in texts. This demands a higher academic functional ability, placing the student at a similar level as their English-speaking peers. According to Cummins this will take from five to seven more years, or even longer. “Every year English L.1 (first language) students gain more sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical knowledge and increase their literacy skills. Thus, English language learners must catch up with a moving target” (2006, p. 63). Cummins (2009, p. 383) explained this more simply: “vocabulary knowledge and phonological processing clearly follow different developmental trajectories after the initial grades.”

Supporting Cummins’ views, the EAL students will require much more time learning academic language proficiency at a level which would match their grade-equivalent peers. The role of the mainstream classroom teacher cannot be undervalued, as these teachers, like myself, will need to provide much needed support and encouragement, ensuring adequate scaffolding and bridging of vocabulary development. Teachers will need to be implementing effective teaching strategies within the English language to ensure that EAL students will be successful beyond their initial EAL language learning.

Literature Review:

Our Growing Mosaic in Saskatchewan

The growing number of immigrants and refugees arriving in the province of Saskatchewan is shifting the pedagogy of school classrooms. A multicultural group of students bring diversity to Saskatchewan's economy along with vitality and a freshness which creates the multidimensional aspect of what Canada has always been: a melting pot of different cultures. Saskatchewan's population grew by 16,492 in 2007 to 1,006,644, an increase of 1.7%, well ahead of the national average growth of 1.1%, "the biggest one-year jump in our population in more than half a century" (Sound Off, 2008). Immigration changes in population have implications for the students in our schools as well as the professional development of teachers in in-service and pre-service training.

More recent statistics indicate "... the population last year increased by 15,131 to 1,023,810, a new 20-year high" ("Immigration Helps Spark," 2009). As part of the news release, "Immigration Helps Spark Population Jump in 2008" (2009), the Minister responsible for Immigration, Rob Norris, said, "Newcomers help to build our communities through diversity and innovation."

Canada also offers refugee protection to people in Canada following the humanitarian tradition of international obligations. The Government Assisted Refugees (GARS) program tries to respond to the desperate circumstances of refugees. "Of the more than 7,000 refugees who arrive in Canada each year under the GARS plan, approximately 75% are children and youth who are school-age Their parents are extremely poor, have low levels of education, minimal life-skills suited to the Canadian context, do not speak either English or French and are often illiterate in their first language" (Position Paper on Second Language Learning, September 2006, p. 5). Consequently, school districts need to be able to respond to the educational needs of these children and their families. Their communities also must, for many of these refugee children have experienced trauma and war. From information obtained from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2006), Canada began resettling Karen refugees and will welcome about 3,900 refugees from some of the most remote camps in Thailand.

Educating teachers to accommodate a culturally diverse group of learners "requires a commitment to a society that is both democratic and multicultural and it requires us to look carefully at what knowledge, skills, and attitudes today's teachers will need to teach tomorrow's children" (Ladson-Billings, 1991, p. 194). Her views are still relevant today.

Nieto (2002) offered: "Let me make it clear that I strongly believe in multicultural education" (p. 6) and further suggested that it was important to teach EAL students effectively, to prevent students "who know little about their cultural backgrounds and are even ashamed or embarrassed by them" (p. 6). More recently, Nieto (2006) questioned what exactly teachers can do: "What does it take to become effective teachers of students of culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and racially diverse backgrounds?" (p. 457). How are specialist EAL teachers meeting the needs of students, and how am I, as a mainstream classroom teacher, meeting the diverse needs of my students? I wanted to understand effective strategies and methodologies as well as learn about culturally responsive approaches to teaching in a multilingual classroom or setting.

Yoon (2008) wrote, “many teachers lack understanding of how their roles and teaching approaches can best support ELL’s (English Language Learners) needs” (p. 495).

Nieto presented this idea: “Teacher education is at a crossroads today” (2006, p. 457). Teachers will continue to be challenged to implement and develop relevant curriculum and assessment materials, support colleagues in their program delivery with students requiring English language support and continue to create multilingual classroom communities which support culturally relevant pedagogical practices.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) wrote extensively about language acquisition and are strong advocates of teaching students to read by reading and by understanding what is on the page by picking up contextual clues embedded in the text. “By paying close attention to the context and the key words in the sentences, they (second language learners) will be able to make a good guess at the meaning ... this ‘contextual inferencing’ is the secret to learning to understand a second language” (p. 75). They also use the phrase “comprehensible reading,” which helps students to use strategies that are innate. More recently, Krashen (2009) wrote, “... in acquiring vocabulary by reading, readers use cues external to the word, from the text and their prior knowledge” (p. 22). There are many extraneous interests for students beyond the school walls; our challenges in schools are to create a climate that entices students to seek challenges in learning about themselves and their world.

Krashen’s term “input plus one” explains that when students acquire knowledge, it is added on to the understanding of the message. When a teacher is able to create a climate of low anxiety, then this student can dialogue with both peers and the teacher allowing for good communication. “The activities done in the classroom aimed at acquisition must foster a lowering of the affective filter of the students” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 21). Negative feelings and anxiety by students will reduce their ability to acquire any new language and, in fact, delay language acquisition.

York (2008) explained that teaching EAL students provides teachers with a unique opportunity to make a “significant contribution to your school’s emotional climate” (p. 26) since the diversity of our classrooms is becoming more evident. She continued, “Learners may be a challenge, but regardless of your experience, or lack of experience, with students who are not proficient in the English language, your responsibility is to work with all students.”

In her writing, Kendall (2006) wrote about the importance of classroom management and making use of smaller instructional groups with EAL learners: “Teachers can plan wonderful lessons, but it won’t matter how much time they spend planning or how creative the lessons are if classroom management doesn’t support small-group instruction and classroom routines don’t support independence” (p. 31).

Initially the EAL program began in the urban areas in the late 1970s with most students being Vietnam refugees who needed language support and counselling from trauma and insecurity related to political difficulties in their country. Ashworth (1988) explains:

For example, immigration in 1963 from Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan combined was only 1,187 and from India and Pakistan it was 858. By 1973 those figures had increased to 16,094 and 11,488. The arrival of the Vietnamese “boat people” in 1980 added yet another new Asian ethnic group. (p. 37)

With much needed intensive language support, students in these classes returned to the classroom environments, sufficiently capable of continuing their learning, over the

course of the subsequent five to seven years. Their ability to communicate cognitively with their peers further developed.

Teachers are responsible to try to engage all their students, including the ones needing EAL English language support, in relevant learning experiences. The more varied these experiences and hands-on activities are, the more successful the students will be as they respond actively to them. Establishing personal relationships with students, gaining their respect and trust, and tapping into their abilities and their gifts will require a commitment of time, knowledge, and resourcefulness.

Noddings (2006) wrote: “We have to show how it is possible to include social, emotional, and ethical learning in all curricular and extracurricular activities” (p.238). She indicated that teachers must become better listeners to their students. “It is not simply a matter of teaching students topics and skills associated with social-emotional learning. It is essentially a matter of showing, by our own acts and attitudes, that we care about what our students are going through and that we are partners in the search for meaning” (p. 240). Ethics of care was a foundational belief for Noddings.

Teachers are encouraged to build upon what the students know, and acknowledging cultural practices and traditions will have a positive impact for students when they are able to value and accept the cultural differences within their multilingual classrooms.

A Model of Effective Teaching: The Template

I have believed that I am a culturally responsive teacher, although in my turning point year, 2007-08, I did question myself. A young Grade 7 student (in my multi-grade 6-7 classroom) arrived in September from Shanghai, China, unable to speak any English. Without my immediate adaptations in curriculum, program delivery and survival vocabulary, he would struggle to understand me. During the course of the next few months, from the lenses of a mainstream classroom teacher, I spoke with many colleagues. Four of these eventually became my participant research teachers. As I gained more knowledge and created changes every day to help this student, I knew that my experiences were limited; I needed strategies which would effectively make every day filled with meaningful language experiences for this very bright student.

I had created my definition of effective teaching in the second course I took in my graduate studies program. This definition would provide a frame of reference for me, a lens with which to observe the four participant EAL English language support teachers. Using a qualitative research approach, I discovered additional instructional strategies within my own multilingual classroom that year, and my model provided me with a framework as I observed and took field notes.

The cultural component pervades all aspects of the multi-dimensional image, which is circular and global, representing the cultures of the world. Culturally relevant teaching, as an ideology, provides a framework including every individual who has the capacity to learn and contribute to our society.

See Figure 1. A Global Constructivist Approach, Based on the Definition of Effective Teaching, March 2007.

Methodology: Assembling the Quilt

The EAL classrooms in my urban environment were the location for my research, and I had an opportunity to dialogue with my four participant specialist teachers. The dialogue that had begun two years ago would continue and enable me to take those foundational pieces as framework and use them to scaffold and inform my present teaching practices in my multilingual classroom.

As a mainstream classroom teacher who was in transition, I needed to search out different methods in my teaching. I needed to be aware of the physical and emotional climate I was attempting to establish in how I related to the students in my multilingual classroom. The curriculum was the framework for the units I was teaching, and I needed to be able to assess the adaptations I would implement as I developed relationships and learned more about each student's needs.

From conversations with my colleagues, I knew that we wanted our EAL students to make greater gains in academic, linguistic and social areas within our timelines. We felt frustrated when we felt that we weren't effectively teaching these students what they needed to succeed. We also struggled with the ways in which we might have adapted specific units of instruction within the given curriculum; we wanted more communication with the specialist teacher as well, to support our efforts within our multilingual classrooms. The comments these teachers made resonated with me: in this time-consuming planning for the EAL students, clearly the classroom teacher's role was becoming more complex. Even more important than the time, we all needed knowledge and support in EAL pedagogy.

The four specialist teachers had between 12 and 15 students as compared to 30 for a mainstream classroom teacher. These students were from many different countries, and English was not their first language.

To begin the research process, I had prepared nine guiding questions (see Appendix E) which I used in the individual interviews. At a later date, it was possible to analyze and review the information that was gleaned through the observations within the teachers' classrooms, the conversational interviews and the field notes which I gathered to identify recurring themes. Furthermore, by incorporating the knowledge gained from the literature review, I was guided to answer my own inquiry question about educating EAL students, thereby informing my professional practice as I continued to face the challenges of teaching in a multilingual classroom.

The Rationale for Naturalistic Inquiry: Finding More Pieces

I have used qualitative research as the framework for this thesis, based on the goals I wanted to accomplish. I observed the students and the teachers in their own environments, because the teachers specialized in English language support. With a research grant made possible by the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching, I was able to take time away from my classroom to become a participant observing four teachers.

I observed the teachers working with EAL students in a specific program to determine if their strategies were effective and culturally responsive methods in educating English language-challenged students who needed additional support beyond their classroom. During this time, I continued to reflect metacognitively as I researched my own daily teaching practices with all my students, “and questioning how I was making adaptations. For me, teaching is Research – looking and looking again” at the stuff of our classroom lives (Class Notes, ERES 800, 2007).

Through participant observation of both the teachers and the students in their surroundings, I would be able to take field notes and conduct fieldwork (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 3). The setting for the research would allow me to gather descriptive data from the classroom interactions that I watched in addition to reading the transcripts from my interviews with the four focus teachers which allowed me to hear the stories from their perspectives.

A *Letter of Consent for Participant/Teacher* was completed (see Appendix B) which indicated the details of the research study. I used a compilation of reflective journal writings, field notes, visual observations in the classroom, personal teacher reflections, and interviews and audio-recordings for the four specifically identified EAL literacy teachers. The focus remained on the teachers, not the students; this was minimal risk research, since students were not interviewed and their academic work was not studied.

The conversational interviews were semi-structured, designed to convey a rich understanding of the teacher participants’ way of thinking. With my nine guiding questions (see Appendix E) and a maximum time limit of 60 minutes, I listened to the teachers’ voices individually learning about how these four specialist teachers experienced teaching EAL students. I analyzed the ways that these teachers matched the pedagogical styles and organizational arrangements of literacy learning with immigrant children’s language and cultural values.

The *Letter of Consent for Release of Transcripts* (see Appendix C) allowed me to provide a smoothed copy of the transcribed information. The interviews were conducted in a quiet environment in the school setting, free from any distraction. Before the classroom observations occurred in the four schools, a *Letter of Assent for Classroom Observation* was sent home with the students (see Appendix D). The letter indicated to the parents of the students in all respective schools that the research project had been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board and that there were no known risks. The local school board also required me to submit an *Application Form for Permission to Conduct Research in Saskatoon Public Schools* (see Appendix A).

Participant Selection: The Stitches Become Stronger

I selected four participant teachers in four different schools. The teachers were specialist teachers who had a range of teaching experience from three to 20 years in EAL classrooms. I felt that it was more important to be able to listen individually to the four specialist English language teachers, though collective responses might have been an option. I have used pseudonyms for these teachers: Gail, Brenda, Walter and Larry. The pseudonyms protect the anonymity of participants in any research study.

I felt it was important to ensure the integrity of the data collection. “Qualitative interviews vary in the degree to which they are structured. Some interviews, although relatively open-ended, are focused around particular topics or may be guided by some general questions” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). Visual observations of both the students and their classroom environment provided me with data in correlation to the dialogue and teaching instructions that occurred. After observing these teachers with their students for more of the day, the interviewing procedure allowed for the culmination of rich data that supported my observational field notes.

The analysis of the data involved the process of systematically searching and arranging the collected interview transcripts, field notes, documents and artifacts to come up with findings. In sifting through the data, I used Cummins and Krashen’s theories of second language learning as a filter as well as the work of Vygotsky and learning. Data analysis and interpretation moved me, the researcher, from the rambling pages of description to thoughtful interpretation.

The culturally responsive teachers, who were gifted in their ability to engage the students, had created an optimum learning environment. Educating teachers to accommodate a culturally diverse group of learners “requires a commitment to a society that is both democratic and multicultural and it requires us to look carefully at what knowledge, skills, and attitudes today’s teachers will need to teach tomorrow’s children” (Ladson-Billings, 1991, p. 194). Stepping inside four different classrooms specifically set up to engage learners in a multilingual classroom allowed me to view an ordinary day in the English language support classrooms for immigrants with varying abilities in communicating in English. Not only were EAL students learning English as an added language, but through immersion they were also learning about western Canadian culture.

The uniqueness and diversity of students in our classrooms can be metaphorically represented by the multifaceted pieces in a designed quilt. Through diverse teaching strategies and methodologies using curriculum guides, the role of teachers is profound: creating a learning environment which incorporates students’ many gifts and attributes. The role of educators in multilingual classrooms cannot be understated.

The Global Constructivist Model (see Figure 1), which supported my definition of effective teaching, has provided an opportunity to look at who I am as a teacher, to examine the global implications that can result from the choices I make. As another tool, it became the lens through which my observations, as threads, became research findings, or pieces of fabric.

With my vested interest and the paperwork finalized, I entered the four schools, quite oblivious to the classroom I left behind, for a short period of time. I was ready to

observe, to listen, to make notes and to involve myself in the dynamics of another environment that allowed me further opportunities to learn about myself and others. The caring attitude that the teachers showed allowed their students to be wrapped in warmth and provided the security they needed to go back into their families and communities with increased confidence. I believe that this research was important and timely for both classroom and EAL teachers in my jurisdiction. The growing diversity in our classrooms reflected the importance of this research.

Final Preparation: Out Into the Community, the Colourful Quilts Emerge

As mentioned previously, the four specialist EAL English language support teachers were Gail, Brenda, Walter and Larry. Both Gail and Walter taught in an elementary school, kindergarten to Grade 8, where the EAL population of students in the neighbourhood was so high that the need for an EAL specialist teacher in that school was urgent. The EAL program was an integral part of these two schools, and the specialist teacher remained in the school, in a home classroom. This was in contrast to the other classrooms observed, which offered pull-out programs where the children came to the classroom primarily from outside of the neighbourhood by taxi. In so doing, the taxis created an intricate network of pick-ups and deliveries throughout the school. Within this urban environment, five schools overall provided EAL English language support at the elementary level, with specialist EAL teachers placed in these schools, and I was able to observe in four of these.

Brenda and Larry were teaching in elementary schools also, ranging from kindergarten to Grade 8. The children who needed English language support and who lived in the neighbourhood also attended this school, as there was a substantially higher population of immigrant families in these neighbourhoods. Additionally, other children who lived within a five mile radius of these schools received free transportation by taxi to attend this school, and receive English language support taught by a specialist EAL teacher. They spent two or three half-days at this school, depending on the level of English support that they required, for up to a maximum of three years. They entered these classrooms with all the gear that they would need for the day, including their backpacks, and they stayed there for either one morning or afternoon.

The district's goal was for them to receive English language instruction in order to develop social language or basic interpersonal and functional communication skills (BISC). This is learned within two years of being immersed in an intensive language immersion experience. When the level of English communicative ability had reached a particular benchmark, those children would try to merge back into the regular classroom instruction, taught by a mainstream teacher who might have additional skills especially related to supporting EAL students in their acquisition of academic language or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

As previously cited in *A Patchwork of Pieces*, Cummins (1996, p. 58) explained these distinctions of language mastery. Through the grades, the language becomes more cognitively demanding, involving knowledge for more complex school tasks, which are subject-specific, and encompasses skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating and informing. The acquisition of academic language which will allow the student to perform with grade-alike peers will require between five to seven years or even more, with the support of the mainstream classroom teacher providing scaffolding and meaningful language experiences.

Presentation of Results: Basic Guidelines

In my turning point year, my young Chinese student was the catalyst to project myself further into the research and implications of what it would be like to observe EAL specialist teachers, who would impact my teaching methodology and instructional strategies within my mainstream classroom. With their support and encouragement in that year, I helped him to find his place in our social setting, validated his cultural background, helped him to learn to be independent and to involve himself in his own learning, and learned about his life, his interests and his goals. These EAL specialist teachers eventually became my research participants.

It would certainly be a lot easier if all students came from the same linguistic background. As families have settled into many smaller centres, the reality of today is the multilingual classroom, which has students who speak many different languages. Multicultural education and culturally responsive or culturally relevant teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes and approaches to learning. It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages, rather than being embarrassed by them. In formal curriculum, it is worthy content which builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences and encourages dialogue about the differences. It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles, helping to meet the individual needs of all students. These strategies include direct and indirect instruction, helping students to develop those higher order thinking skills that will be required. Culturally relevant teaching incorporates cultural information, resources and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools and includes an attitude of openness, listening and sharing by students, teachers and families.

Using direct and indirect teaching strategies within the multilingual classroom, students would be specifically taught through demonstration, modeling and step-by-step instructions, which would further develop their visual literacy skills through listening and viewing comprehension. In these "critical moments," students would develop "knowledge in the making" (Symon-Lungal) which would empower them to learn. The culturally diverse students in our classrooms will need varied and specifically targeted teaching strategies to learn to effectively and efficiently communicate using the English language.

To facilitate listening and speaking development, a specialist EAL teacher might include these specific behaviours: modified teacher talk, a slowed-down rate of clear speech, slight pauses strategically placed, familiar vocabulary repeated, paraphrasing as needed and a lack of idioms and colloquialisms throughout the rhythm of the daily activities.

Supportive Agencies

The Settlement Workers in Schools program (SSWIS) is a school-based outreach program that connects newly arrived families and resources in the school and community. It also promotes settlement and encourages student achievement in schools. The Mission of the Saskatoon Open Door Society is to welcome and assist refugees and immigrants to become informed and effective participants in Canadian society and to involve the local community in their hospitable reception and just acceptance. The Open Door Society takes a holistic approach to service delivery and provides services and programming in the areas of settlement and integration, language training and employment services.

Global Gathering is another immigrant settlement agency which has, as its main mandate, a goal of providing sufficient resources for new families and helping them in their initial adjustment period. This agency has worked closely with schools and has arranged for translators to facilitate the interaction between home and school, improving communication with teachers and parents.

Other agencies, like the public libraries, have also tried to respond to the growing numbers of immigrants' needs. The Toastmasters Club, TLC Branch (Talk, Lead, Communicate) is an educational study group focused on helping adults to speak in public, allowing a forum for cross-cultural perspectives (<http://www.tlc.freetoasthost.org>).

The Salvation Army provides teaching of English for parents, enabling families to build communities with other families. Its close proximity with some neighbourhood schools facilitates this valuable involvement.

Building a Cultural Community: Walter's Story

On a chilly December morning, Walter used the morning announcements of the day as a forum for his more advanced students to demonstrate their understanding of the message. Around a circular table, he encouraged fluency by assisting students in completing a calendar. When the mathematics lesson on fractions followed, Walter used various students to physically stand at the front, as the others orally described them in fractional terms. In the next group of students, Walter helped them learn about simple and compound sentences using a formula pattern, or stem sentence. Providing time for oral practice and repetition, students worked with partners to continue their learning, followed by writing in notebooks.

As younger students arrived in the next time period, Walter used direct instruction, followed by students reading colour-coded strips, deciding on the correct order to make logical sentences. Walter's manner was relaxed, he gave positive and immediate feedback to his students, and it was obvious that they liked him and responded eagerly to his directions and invitations to learning. Walter had created many opportunities for language and learning experiences, which is a critical component for EAL instruction. Students wrote about many of their experiences that day, solidifying their learning, and reflected on prior enjoyable sentiments.

With younger students, Walter used a picture book with a tape and pre-recorded story. Picture books are dual texts, with words and visuals, which support meaning from the text and create meaning for students. Students visually viewed the unfolding plot, and "read the pictures" with limited vocabulary, as in a picture walk. The second time, as re-reading, students developed sight vocabulary, reinforcing the meaning of the story. Modeling and step-by-step instruction are also critical strategies in EAL language instruction. To conclude, students played a game similar to "fish," using patterned questions like, "Do you have a ...?" Students were engaged as Walter tapped into their background knowledge, helping students as they socially constructed language together, consolidated new vocabulary and expended their linguistic options with, "I have a dog."

Recognizing the intellectual and social competencies of our students and providing them with "comprehensible input" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) help students add on new knowledge in understandable pieces. Using pictures and word cards, as well as body gestures, Walter played bingo with his students, integrating manipulatives (tangible, concrete pieces which help students build connections between physical materials and abstract symbols) to help students build their knowledge of mathematical concepts. With the advent of the World Wide Web, a new category of manipulatives is available – virtual. These digital objects can be manipulated with a mouse, similar to their counterparts: Cuisenaire rods, base 10 blocks and tangrams. With brain/body connections, experiential learning more fully engages students in all subject areas, across all grade levels.

Walter's flexibility and diverse teaching strategies seemed to be able to fully engage his students, in all grade levels. Within a neighbourhood school, Walter was in close proximity to build bridges of communication with mainstream classroom teachers, thereby improving his relationships with students and teachers alike. He saw his students participating in school assemblies and going for recesses, and these daily activities strengthened his relationships with them.

Gail's Neighbourhood School Experiences

Gail's students began their day with individual silent reading as Gail circulated quietly, greeting each child and asking for their home reading log and journal. In the large group, Gail gathered the students for choral reading of sentences as they observed a large picture. To ease their discomfort, some students simply mouthed the words as other took higher risks and even read aloud independently. As Gail copied more sentences which were built from the ideas generated by the students from their visual clues, students also copied into their notebooks. Later on, the students chanted vowel sounds from bright cards taped on the board. Repetition of more sounds followed, with blended consonants such as sh, ch, ng, wh and qu.

Music was integrated into a portion of the morning activities, as students sang a song about baking a cake. Gail physically manipulated and mixed the ingredients at the front, showing the vocabulary on the word card wall, and demonstrating motions like beating the eggs. Students copied the **ake** vowel into the notebooks, with patterned words like bake, take and make. Word walls become dictionaries for young spellers who are incorporating new words into their writing. The softly lit Christmas tree added to the relaxed atmosphere, as students worked quietly while Gail remained in their circle space.

Within the day Gail told stories, used puppets, played a bingo game, used felt as manipulatives to sound out syllables in words and changed activities about every 30 minutes. Puppetry is an extremely effective tool to blend drama and visual elements and show character development through actions and speech. Playing games allows for social interaction among students, creates hands-on activities and engages their bodies and minds congruently. Gail used puppets to orient the children to partner activities by asking, "What did you do in school today?" and students created responses like, "I made a picture in school today." Students enjoyed hearing the read-aloud book about the Christmas story, and Gail led them in body percussion and clapping hands on knees, in a rhythm to match "What **did you see** on the Christmas tree?" and "I **saw a gift** on the Christmas tree." Gail invited students individually to choose an item from the magnetized pictures on the board and place on the tree at the front, verbalizing their sentence as they attached the symbol. Gestures and actions from Gail allowed students to model and repeat, experimenting with minimal risk.

Gail was patient, kind and very knowledgeable, using many activities with her students. There were many opportunities for students to feel successful and competent. Within the classroom walls, these students were working with each other, building connections with each other and with their new knowledge, pleasing their teacher and themselves.

Larry's Role With Students Beyond Borders Via Taxi

Larry's students were learning about classification and comparing and contrasting particular details, as they were led in a discussion about similarities and differences in Christmas and Halloween celebrations. Later on, students co-operatively worked in small groups to create a craft mouse, after hearing a read-aloud story and discussing word associations and rhyming patterns within the text. With the read-aloud book, the dual text (picture book) was very well-liked and engaged the beginner level of children, at diverse ages, prior to the craft. They had previously received step-by-step directions to make this mouse and gather their necessary materials. With minimum conversation, students assisted one another, as very young children struggled with the use of scissors and cutting the felt. Their favourite part of this activity was receiving the real candy cane placed to represent the tail of the mouse.

The students watched a DVD on this morning as well, containing very little vocabulary with lots of music and animated cartoon characters. Following the disc, the students talked briefly about their favourite parts; the main words were displayed on a nearby word wall for easier recall and usage. The co-operative groupings in which they were placed allowed the students to organize their thoughts in a less anxious context than whole-class discussions and prepared them for sharing their thoughts within the class at a later time. Small group work is one way of ensuring active participation of students. Group work enables students to move more readily from receiving knowledge to generating knowledge as they elaborate on ideas within the group. Through talk, students are able to personalize this knowledge and scaffold their thinking processes and understandings. For EAL students, these organizational groups would stretch English language acquisition and retention of vocabulary and other language phrases.

Brenda's Pull-Out Taxi Children

Brenda (as well as the other EAL specialist teachers) provided time for a small group of students to work at the computer station on a program called *Rosetta Stone*. This is an interactive program with headphones that engage students in developing vocabulary. It supports students with guided pronunciation models so that students may recognize longer phrases and eventually create and generate their own visuals.

At the same time, Brenda was able to take a smaller group to practise daily greetings in conversation. She modeled the phrases and students responded together, then partnered with each other to practise further. With drill and practice, and immediate feedback, students were comfortable trying new phrases, which were also provided on a handout. Visuals and text allow students to create connections, building on prior knowledge and authenticating their life experiences. Social learning among peers provides a nurturing, supportive environment for students to listen, share and learn about each other. The miniature community (Nieto, 1999, 2005) is being built, with learning and sharing. Students are engaged and they invest their learning when the instruction affirms their identities (Cummins, 2006). By creating engaging opportunities, students are able to move beyond BISC and into CALP.

Visual learning is a teaching and learning style in which ideas, concepts, data and other information are associated with images and visual techniques. It is as important as auditory learning and kinesthetic learning. Playing bingo with her students, Brenda was able to involve the students in a social activity, allowing them to experience the fun factor.

During the day, the students wrote a spelling test based on the long a vowel: made, blade, shaded, lemonade and parade. The next test was on the **short a** vowel: had, add, sad, admit, tadpole, shadow, ladder and others. Teaching word families and phonics provides scaffolding for students' learning (Dong, 2006). The knowledge acquired with vowel sounds will improve and strengthen the students' reading abilities, and direct instruction engages the whole group. During the spelling test, Brenda gave hints to the students, as needed, creating an anxiety-reduced environment.

Brenda, similar to the other EAL teachers, used various handouts with her students, providing information about prepositions in a more structured manner. These handouts were kept in individual file folders in the classroom, used as ongoing assessment and future planning. In planning for instruction with EAL students, Brenda used nursery rhymes, as they provided excellent models when students were learning about the past tense of verbs. There were many pictures, the text was quite short, there were rhyming phrases, students could learn them at home, there were repetitive phrases, they were well-illustrated and entertaining for students, and many nursery rhymes were readily recognized, in maybe slightly different formats.

All participant specialist EAL teachers used many interactive activities with their students. Their teaching strategies included large and small group direct and indirect instruction, brainstorming, book talks, cloze procedure, creative problem solving, demonstrations, games, guided reading and thinking, inquiry, journal writing, learning centers, narrated reading, Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM), role playing, visual imaging and others. The website <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/pd/instr/alpha.html> has a very comprehensive list.

For all EAL teachers, some of the basic vocabulary to be taught immediately through direct instruction included the alphabet, one's address, phone number, home address, school name and address, days of the week, months of the year, seasons and numbers. Additional primary standards included basic sentence structure with subject, verb, direct or indirect object, verb tenses, pronouns, asking questions using who, what, where, when, why and how. There was a basic sense of urgency by teachers to be able to help students in communicative language to express personal needs such as hunger, thirst, pain, illness and bathroom or personal needs.

A student's receptive and expressive vocabulary needs to expand. The receptive vocabulary is the mental storehouse of words he/she recognizes when listening to others speak. His/her expressive vocabulary is the bank of words able to be said, read and written with accuracy. Through listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing, vocabulary and oral abilities will develop. Visuals are vital elements for EAL students, as they have the capacity to transcend the words.

In planning for EAL curriculum delivery for older groups of students, vocabulary can be generated from any subject category, building thematic content. Depending on students' interests, it is important to teach about natural phenomena in our world and to build knowledge in many areas. In smaller groups, the immersion experience and the impact on technology will assist students' growth in language. Digital learning is more enjoyable for students as it is more graphically interesting than worksheets.

Teachers need to be able to be adaptable (Tomlinson, 2003) in their teaching methodology. All students need skills to take back to their regular classroom where they can become more independent in becoming problem solvers. A physical environment which is rich in visuals and pictures allows students to trans-mediate: translating meaning from one sign system to another. It is a powerful tool for thinking and learning. Creating a classroom filled with picture books, math manipulatives, relevant handouts, visuals on word walls and adaptable seating possibilities will help to provide a myriad of learning opportunities and attainable challenges for EAL students, who bring life experiences which they want and need to share. The multilingual and multicultural classroom will allow learning opportunities for everyone.

Conclusions: The Fabric of Our Lives – We Are All One People

The multilingual classroom is certainly the reality in today's classrooms. I wanted to see how the research teachers created classroom communities of learners in social learning spaces. In the context of social learning, I observed the physical and virtual resources which supported student-centred interactive learning. School districts, communities and families, including children, are all stakeholders collaboratively woven together, causing policy makers to be involved in a decision-making process regarding what program models to use that best support the education of EAL students.

Emerging from the research were secondary questions which included how these school districts will pilot new EAL programs, which models will be used with various groups of students and when and if existing programs need to be revised. Ladson-Billings (1991) clearly stated our challenge as educators: "The challenge for teacher educators is not unlike that of classroom teachers. We must meet the students where they are (*vis-à-vis* multicultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and help them move to where they need to be" (p. 187). These students, coming from culturally diverse backgrounds, bring a set of skills and knowledge reflecting both their social and academic experiences. Our role, as educators, is to teach them how to communicate in the English language and to share their knowledge. Mainstream classroom teachers have a very important role to play, as they will receive EAL students into their classrooms, allow them to be removed for additional English language support and continue to provide scaffolding for them for the next five to seven years. Working collaboratively with EAL specialist teachers will ensure the success of our English-challenged students.

Immigrants clearly have adjustments to make. Language is the most obvious learning task. Ideally, students reach their potential when they are able to assimilate the giftedness in their first language and culture and blend this into their next culture. The curriculums have been, historically speaking, largely Eurocentric, and could even be said to have a unique Canadian style, especially in the Social Studies Curriculum at the elementary level, learning about provinces and territories, the Riel Rebellion, the history of the railway and the many well-written historical novels. Examples include: *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker, *Tunnels of Time* by Mary Harelkin Bishop, and *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson, informing students about the West Coast Tlingit tribe of peoples. The breadth and depth of Saskatchewan curriculum allows for rich program development and delivery of excellent material to enrich the lives of all students in our classrooms. The technological resources, also available to teachers, further facilitate English language opportunities to engage students and respond to their education and emotional needs.

In the writing situation, students can be asked to complete journal writings responding to various topics. Being able to write in their own language allows them to keep their language alive and to know that it is important and valued by teachers here. Allowing students to independently read a book or novel in their first language also helps to strengthen their reading and writing skills. Teachers also need to welcome parents into the classroom and school as a valuable resource.

Successful elementary or high school instruction for the classroom teacher included these insights from Canney et al (1999): (a) learn as much as possible about each student's culture, (b) encourage students to share their history, culture, language

with the class, (c) invite the parents of all students to take an active role in their child's education, (d) keep the EAL students in their home room classroom, or at least in their neighbourhood school, providing language support as needed, (e) use the same literacy teaching strategies used with the rest of the class, (f) use various grouping structures, (g) make use of relevant computer technology and websites, and (h) use multiple measures for ongoing assessment in addition to anecdotal observations.

The participant research teachers, in my professional and personal opinion, were teaching with their HEARTS: Hands-on learning, Engaging their students, Activity-centered, with action, Reinforcing vocabulary and making things real to the students, and Teaching the necessary vocabulary and language structures needed to make the activities relevant (Symon-Lungal, 2010).

For each half-day that was spent observing students, some time was spent with students working in pairs, individually, with a bigger group, with the whole group, writing sentences together or words, manipulating materials to show knowledge of something, speaking together, speaking individually, quietly receiving instruction from the teacher during the group lesson, helping one another and moving to different places in the classrooms. For all observational half-days, students were engaged, interested, motivated and challenged to be their best. The teachers had many activities planned for the students and provided scaffolds in their learning.

My research had limitations, as it was specific only to a given time period with a particular model of delivery for intensive English language support, which was provided through two models: pull-out and neighbourhood school programs, with an intricate network of taxi pick-ups and deliveries of students. Analyzing the results and synthesizing the themes was limited by my own experiences, knowledge and time, which is specific to qualitative research.

The challenge to meet the needs of immigrant or refugee students is clearly embedded in the role of the classroom teacher: use content area curriculum, support the students, help them to adjust to the school and maybe a new culture, and be aware of methodology and the classroom climate that he/she has the power to create. The teacher can reduce some of the struggles of the immigrant students by being empathetic. Assigning a buddy to the students will foster a sense of belonging, and teaching key words and basic vocabulary to the students will provide opportunities for academic success (Shore, 2001).

Avery (2001) suggested an extensive variety of books to teach various parts of the English language. To teach homonyms, Fred Gwynne wrote *A Little Pigeon Toad* (Aladdin, 1990), *The King Who Rained* (Aladdin, 1988) and *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* (Aladdin, 1988). To teach functions of speech, Brian P. Cleary wrote *A Mink, Fink, Skating Rink: What is a Noun?* (Carolrhoda, 1999), *I and You and Don't Forget Who: What is a Pronoun?* (Carolrhoda, 2004), *Hairy Scary Ordinary – What is an Adjective?* (Carolrhoda, 2001), and *To Root, to Toot, to Parachute – What is a Verb?* (Carolrhoda, 2001). These rich resources are available to teachers and, as a classroom teacher becoming more aware of literature and resources already written, it was a privilege and a responsibility to seek out these materials and use them to enhance instruction in all subject areas.

There have been various programs in the past four decades to provide English language instruction and support to EAL students and even within Saskatchewan, changes have been made to improve the model, especially within the last few years. Regardless of which model is implemented, small group instruction has been ideal, with a maximum of 15 students and one specialist teacher. The key elements include: the type of

instruction which is provided, the type of curriculum and methods of instruction to be used, the language of instruction and the desired outcomes. The increased demand for specialist teachers continues as the numbers of immigrant students rises in both urban and rural centres.

In one urban city, the majority of specialist EAL teachers are deployed as itinerant teachers: moving to different schools on a daily basis. This model allows students to remain in the neighbourhood school in which they have registered and helps the families to settle into those communities. Anticipating staffing to accommodate these students becomes more challenging, and re-arrangements of staffing will need to be monitored effectively.

As immigrant students continue to rise in both urban and rural centres, it will be important to enter these numbers into a computerized system which will enable them to be part of a developing tracking system. This provides suitable arguments to the Ministry of Education regarding sufficient funding which will support these students effectively in their language and educational needs. Providing benchmarks for assessment of students has been necessary, as not all tools provide the best indicators of English language support. Decisions have not been made quickly; in reality, school districts and school divisions have made many adaptations to accommodate the growing numbers of students and families settling in our province, and they will continue to monitor the educational system as needed. As different levels of governments are involved (municipal, provincial and federal), the process becomes more intricate, demonstrating a stronger level of commitment to the needs of immigrant and refugee families.

Through this research, it became clear that there are no easy, quick-fix solutions to the data collection, planning, piloting, administration, supervision, delivery and assessment of a model for EAL English language support that will accommodate the needs of students, teachers, administrators and policy makers. The research experience has enabled me to take a critical look at the program delivery models that are currently being used in one urban location, and the advantages and disadvantages in their delivery of English language instruction.

Future Research: The Strongest Quilt

At both the elementary and high school levels, there is a common intake form in an attempt to collect pertinent information on students and their families, to better serve their academic and social needs and to assist the Ministry of Education in the province of Saskatchewan. Providing a central reception centre for families is an ideal situation which could provide assessment, orientation and direction to the necessary supports in a timelier manner. Providing more appropriate programming for students with limited formal schooling is also being considered, especially at the secondary level. Refugee students arrive with different challenges, yet their integration is also very important. International students also have different challenges, and these three groups of students (immigrants, refugees and international students) will continue to settle in our province. The goal is to have them completely integrated into regular classes as soon as possible. In this way, when a student graduates from an EAL program, all involved individuals will have common understandings.

One quick glance at the references at the end of this document will reveal many sources to find information about this growing area of EAL. With everything from informational websites to teaching strategies for every age of student and adult, the resources available to learn and expand one's knowledge and variety of effective culturally relevant teaching strategies knows no bounds. Initiative and personal goals are all that is required.

Initial benchmarks are being developed even as I continue to write, as well as entrance/exit procedures for EAL students receiving language support. For immediate assessment of students in elementary grades in a major urban centre in a western prairie province, the Woodcock-Munoz is being chosen as the test to measure human cognitive abilities. It will provide inferences about a speaker's listening and reading comprehension abilities and indicate a level for the student. In seeking the best assessment tools for students, school divisions are demonstrating their responsiveness to cultural sensitivity and being flexible, sharing the realization that no single tool will provide the information to assess and plan for the educational needs of students. A combination of tools will consistently need to be used, as individual strengths and challenges are identified. Further research at the administrative local and provincial levels will dictate which procedures will be continued.

I know that the Chinese boy in my mainstream classroom felt, at the beginning, like a fraying piece of material, unable to fit into the classroom pieces of fabric. Other students gradually formed their own relationships with him, accepting his uniqueness and individuality, creating strong threads, which would eventually allow him to become part of the classroom quilt. He also learned about himself and learned to accept and appreciate the diversity of other students in the multilingual classroom. Things that were important to me, such as helping him feel accepted, learn curriculum and experience school life, were important to my students as well.

My goal was to be able to weave literacy into the fabric of my students' lives, to use print and open doors of understanding for all my students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. As a mainstream classroom teacher, this goal is attainable, with a growing awareness of what cultural responsiveness really means. There are a multitude of resources available which clearly outline strategies teachers could use when teaching students who are learning English. In the multilingual classroom, these strategies will be powerful and can benefit all students.

Education is our key to learn to be culturally responsive individuals, to create a quilt from many pieces of fabric which is strong and colourful and which will withstand the test of time. When I began the writing of this manuscript, I knew the framework for teaching EAL students was changing rapidly. Over the course of the next few years and decades, our students will continue to need English language support in our communities; their commitment and their ability to adapt to a new and different culture will create further opportunities for them to become the leaders and parents of future generations. Together we will blend our cultures and become Canada's mosaic: a representation of many individuals who have come from many nations, from the four corners of the world. We are all seeking to be inter-dependent, contributing gifts to one another, while maintaining our individualities.

Speaking metaphorically, the many quilts that we create as teachers will envelop our hearts and minds, seeking the truths which will enhance the personal and social ties in our families and our communities and which will celebrate our diversity in our countries in the world.

I wish to close by including a poem written by Neil Horne, titled "I am an ESL Student." This poem can be found in Appendix G. I feel that it encompasses many of the thoughts and emotions of the students I have taught, who have come to Canada as immigrants and strangers and have remained here as part of Canada's rich cultural milieu and mosaic. They have become part of the fabric of our nation: they have evolved, as my title indicates, from snippets or pieces of fabric to quilt.

They have become part of the fabric of our nation: they have evolved, as my title indicates, from snippets or pieces of fabric to quilt.

Appendix A: Application Form for Permission to Conduct Research in Saskatoon Public Schools

Completed application forms are submitted to: **Coordinator: Research and Measurement**

Applicant:

Margaret Symon-Lungal

Telephone: (306)249-9010 home

683-7130 work

261-3230 cell

247 Briarvale Bay, Saskatoon, SK, S7V 1B8

Present position: Classroom Teacher, Gr. 7, Brunskill School/KCC

* This study is a requirement for the Masters of Education Degree, major in Curriculum Studies.

* Yes, this applicant will conduct the study.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED STUDY: “WEAVING A QUILT: ADAPTABILITY IN TEACHING ESL STUDENTS FROM A CLASSROOM TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE”

Please see the attached. The title, statement of problem, research question, significance are all discussed.

Research Methodology includes: participant observation of four classroom ESL teachers, maximum two times in each classroom, as well as individual teacher interviews, with audio-taping and transcribing, forty-five minutes duration for these four teachers.

Intended use of results: to be published as a Masters’ thesis, in fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of Masters of Education, major in Curriculum Studies; anticipated date of completion, 2010.

PARTICIPANTS:

- Students in four ESL classrooms in Saskatoon, with their teacher, maximum 2 half-days each
- 4 classroom teachers, interviewed and audio-taped, 45 minutes each
- Proposed school sites: Greystone Heights, Lawson Heights, W.P.Bate, Brevoort Park (classrooms specifically designated for students requiring ESL support)
- Non-participant observation of students within the classrooms, no direct interaction with any students

TIME FRAME: Proposed Dates: Commencing, October/November, 2008
Completion date: December, 2008

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS:

- Copies of consent forms (Appendix A, Saskatoon Public Schools form, Appendix B for Teacher Participants, Appendix C for Audio-Transcribing, Appendix D for Parents)
- All above copies and appendices sent to school principal, Mr. T. Kikcio, and STF regarding the McDowell Foundation Grant
- Copies of interview questions for the teacher/participants (Appendix E)
- Signed letter or certificate of approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Ethics Board
- Information package provided to the ethics committee

UNIVERSITY AUTHORIZATION:

This application, the research design and instruments mentioned herein have been approved by:

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Linda-Wason-Ellam, University of Saskatchewan

Faculty Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

COMMITMENT OF RESEARCHER:

____ I am willing to provide a final report of my study to the Saskatoon Public Schools.

____ I am willing to provide a presentation of my research findings to schools and/or the school division.

____ I agree to adhere to the ethical standards and procedures as outlined in my application package.

____ I agree to seek permission to make any changes in the methodology outlined in this application.

____ I agree to recognize the financial assistance of the STF through the McDowell Foundation Grant and provide their foundation with a copy of the research document.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix B:

Letter of Consent for Participant/Teacher

I appreciate your participation in the research study, “Weaving a Quilt: Adaptability in Teaching ESL Students from a Classroom Teacher’s Perspective” identifying teacher’s adaptabilities in methodology and teaching practices. The purpose of the study will explore the necessary teacher adaptations with bi-cultured (ESL) students in each of four classrooms in Saskatoon, using reflective journal writings, field notes, observations in the classroom, personal teacher reflections by the researcher, and interviews and audio-recordings of four specifically identified ESL literacy teachers. In order to protect the interests of the participants I will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. I will be observing in the classroom, gathering data such as field notes including seating arrangements and room layouts, and writing my reflective journals to make sense of what is observed from my perspective. I will be listening to questions asked of students, their responses, and what I believe are adaptations made by teachers. I will observe your teacher interactions and dialogues, up to a maximum of two half days in each of the four classrooms in Saskatoon. I will not be observing the students as the focus will be on the teacher and best pedagogical practices. I will have previously presented a letter to be made available to the students in the classroom (see Appendix D) to inform parents that the researcher will be present in the classroom, observing and taking anecdotal notes for the two half-days.
2. I will be meeting with you to discuss your perceptions of teaching ESL students in your classroom and specifically your adaptations which benefit these students. I will audio-record our conversations, for approximately forty-five minutes, using my brief outline to keep the conversations focused. (see Appendix E). Your experience as an ESL teacher and the experiences you share with me will be important. I will create a favorable atmosphere for you to share your ideas. * If at any point you wish to have the recording device turned off, that request will be honored.
3. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed and analyzed for themes. I will present a smoothed narrative version of the manuscripts with false starts and repetitions removed to make it more readable. I will check with you orally about the audio-taped transcriptions. You may add, delete and change anything during this process so that it reflects what you wish to share. Afterwards, I will ask you to sign a Transcript/ Data Release Form. (see Appendix C).
4. The data including audio-tapes, transcriptions, and field notes, collected for this study will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan with my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.
5. The confidentiality and anonymity of you/ the school/ the participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms and the deletion of any identifying information.
6. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the mini-study, the tape recordings and interview data will be destroyed.

7. The results and interpretations of the study will be used to fulfill the researcher's requirements to complete the thesis and meet required standards for graduate studies. Except for the researcher in the study, your participation will remain confidential. Your name will not be used in the final report or in-class presentations. Pseudonyms will be used.

If you have any questions about your participation or your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan (966-2084) or you can contact me, Margaret Symon-Lungal at 683-7130, or e-mail me at: symon-lungalm@spsd.sk.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies, 966-7578 (home 653-5844), or linda.wason-ellam@usask.ca

I, _____ understand that this research project has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, _____(date) and I agree to participate. I, _____ am aware of the nature of the study and understand what is expected of me and I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the study without penalty. A copy of this form has been given to me for my records and at the end of the study I will receive a copy of the report.

Researcher's signature
Ms Margaret Symon-Lungal

Date

Participant/Teacher signature

Date

Appendix C:

Letter of Consent for Release of Transcripts

I appreciate your participation in the research study, “Weaving a Quilt: Adaptability in Teaching ESL Students from a Classroom Teacher’s Perspective”, regarding a teacher’s adaptations with bi-cultured (ESL) students in your classroom. I am returning the transcripts of your audio-taped interviews for your perusal and the release of confidential information. I will adhere to the following guidelines which are designed to protect your anonymity, confidentiality and interests in the study.

1. Please read and recheck the transcripts for accuracy of information. You may add or clarify the transcripts to say what you intended to mean or include additional comments that will be in your own words. You may also delete any information that you may not want to be quoted in the study.
2. The interpretations from this study will be used for me, the researcher, to fulfill the requirements to meet the standards for Graduate Studies, in completing my thesis. Except for the researcher in the study, your participation has remained confidential. Your name or any identifying descriptors will not be used in the final report or in any scholarly articles or presentations if you do not wish to have it used.
3. In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, the tape recordings, writing samples, and transcriptions made during the study will be kept with the researcher’s supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, in a locked file until the study is finished. After completion of the study, the tapes and other data will be kept for five years at the University of Saskatchewan and then destroyed, according to the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.
4. Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will be destroyed.

I, _____ understand the guidelines above and agree to release the revised transcripts to the researcher. A copy of the transcript release form is provided for your records.

Date

(Participant signature)

(Researcher’s signature)

Appendix D: Letter of Assent for Classroom Observation

December, 2008

Dear Parents,

I am a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan working on a Master's of Education Degree. I am very interested in teaching ESL students and how I am able to adapt my teaching practices for these students especially. I have been a classroom teacher for many years and I will be observing in the ESL teacher's classroom, keeping the focus on the teacher during instructional lessons in the classroom.

When I finish the study, I will write about it in a paper to be presented in my graduate class so that more people will come to understand and appreciate the many ways that teachers can meet the needs of all students in their classroom, especially ESL students, who have additional challenges in learning based on language and cultural differences.

There are no known risks. This research project has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, as of November 28, 2008.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me, Margaret Symon-Lungal at 683-7130 (work) or my instructor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies, 966-7578 (home 653-5844). As well, you may contact the Ethics Office at 966-2084.

Thank you for allowing me to further my studies.

Sincerely,
Margaret Symon-Lungal,
Graduate Research Student

Appendix E:

Interview Questions for Audio Taping of EAL Teachers

1. Please describe your experience working as a classroom teacher, especially with EAL students at this location.
2. Please discuss the general backgrounds of students related to what countries they have come from, what languages they have for their language of origin, and the many reasons for these children to be in our schools.
3. What is the biggest challenge that you face in your present position teaching EAL students?
4. How do you specifically manage the many levels of students that you receive in this classroom?
5. What are the main adaptations that you have made as a classroom teacher in this setting? Please describe any of these.
6. Please share with me your happiest moments teaching in this EAL classroom and also your experiences dealing with some of the challenges you have overcome.
7. What goals do you have for these students? Do you feel that you have been given adequate support to meet these goals?
8. Please feel free to share any other information that you feel would be helpful for me to understand, related to your day-to-day teaching assignment.
9. Any other comments you have...

Appendix F: ESL Levels: General Description for Grades 3 to 9

Level 1 – Limited Formal Schooling

This student has had interruptions in previous schooling. This student needs intensive language and academic instruction. At this level, the student is learning to

- L respond to single words, simple instructions, and common expressions;
- S speak using learned phrases and simple sentences;
- R read familiar words and phrases and decode new words; and
- W write simple sentences from models.

Level 2 – Beginner

This student may rely on first language and culture. This student participates in class activities that are modeled and repeated. At this level, the student is learning to

- L understand short, repeated, familiar classroom communication;
- S express ideas using simple connected sentences;
- R find and retell information from simple text; and
- W write familiar vocabulary and simple sentences.

Level 3 – Low Intermediate

This student participates in most class activities and experiments with language. At this level, the student is learning to

- L understand main ideas and purposes of longer spoken communication;
- S speak clearly on familiar topics;
- R develop strategies to understand new words and phrases on familiar topics, and comprehends main ideas and details of various text; and
- W write short text independently on a variety of topics.

Level 4 – High Intermediate

This student participates in class activities and uses language strategies with support. At this level the student is learning to:

- L understand ideas from a variety of classroom tasks and interactions;
- S speak with appropriate language for a variety of academic purposes;
- R read and understand more complex text with practice and support; and
- W write complex, well-organized text with supporting detail.

Level 5 – Advanced

This student demonstrates Grade Level expectations with occasional language or cultural misunderstanding. This student may require additional time to complete tasks. At this level the student is learning to:

- L understand most spoken text in a variety of social and academic situations;
- S speak fluently and adjust speech appropriately for the situation;
- R read grade level material with occasional cultural misunderstandings; and
- W write effectively on a range of topics appropriate to grade level standards with occasional grammar errors.

Source – Calgary Board of Education

Appendix G:

I am an ESL Student by Neil Horne

I am an ESL student ...

I did not choose to be here, or to leave my friends, or to leave my home
I do not look like my brother or my sister, I look like me, and that is normal, it is you who looks strange
I am very fortunate because at the end of the day I will have two or three languages

you see, I am an ESL student ...

I like blue jeans – the first time I saw my national dress was at a Multicultural Night at my new Canadian school
I do not live on strange ethnic foods, I like ice cream, pizza, Coca Cola and junk food
I am not by birth-right a mathematics or science scholar

you see, I am an ESL student ...

I am a child en route to adulthood and that trip will be as challenging for me as any other young person
I am not by ethnic definition a gang member, a cheat, a male chauvinist, a suppressed female, a bad driver, a compulsive gambler, or part of a close-knit extended family
I am not learning disabled, educationally retarded or in need of fixing, I just don't speak, write or read English well, but that will change

you see, I am an ESL student ...

I am as unique as any Canadian-born young person and as a group my friends and I are as different and as similar as any group of young people
I would prefer to attend my neighbourhood school and to become part of my community
I have parents who are very involved in my education, they may not, however, share your definition of involvement

you see, I am an ESL student ...

I am not responsible for the sins of my father or his father
I, like you, have a personality that has been shaped, in part, by my culture; my parents, like your parents, have personalities shaped by their cultures, therefore we are different, And therefore, both of us must remember that our personalities are neither good or bad, they just are what they are
I come from a culture that is not without racist aspects, I have as much to learn about living in harmony as you do

you see, I am an ESL student ...

I have a need to love and be loved, to praise and be praised, to correct and be corrected

you see, I am an ESL student.

References

- Ashworth, M. (1988). *Blessed with bilingual brains: Education of immigrant children with English as a second language*. Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Avery, N. (2005). Our multicultural classroom. *Teaching PreK-8*, 36(2), 52-53.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Canney, G., Kennedy, T., Schroeder, M., & Miles, S. (1999). Instructional strategies for K-12 limited English proficiency (LEP) students in the regular classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(5), 540-543.
- Coelho, E. (2004). *Adding English: A guide to teaching in multilingual classrooms*. Don Mills, ON: Pippin Publishing Corporation.
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Los Angeles, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2006). Multiliteracies and equity: How do Canadian schools measure up? *Education Canada*, 46(2), 4-7.
- Cummins, J., & Sayers, D. (1995). *Brave new schools: Challenging cultural illiteracy*. Toronto, ON: OISE Press, Inc.
- Cummins, J., Pray, L., & Jimenez, R. (2009). Literacy and English-language learners: A shifting landscape for students, teachers. *Educational Researcher*, 38(5), 382-385.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.
- Dong, Y. (2006). Learning to think in English. *Educational Leadership*, 64(2), 22-26.
- Duffy, A. (2005). A call for research. *Education Canada*, 45(3), 56.
- Ferst, S. (2007). Go exotica? *International Educator*, 16(3), 75-76, 79.
- Immigration helps spark population jump in 2008. (2009, March 27). *Government of Saskatchewan News Releases*. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=91dd8b51-d00f-41bd-8709-2995ace89625>
- Kendall, J. (2006). Small-group instruction for English language learners: It makes sense. *Principal Leadership*, 6(6), 28-31.
- Krashen, S. (2004). *The power of reading: Insights from the research* (2nd ed.). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Krashen, S. (2009a). Anything but reading. *Knowledge Quest*, 37(5), 18-25.
- Krashen, S. (2009b). Does intensive decoding instruction contribute to reading comprehension? *Knowledge Quest*, 37(4), 72-74.

- Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. San Francisco, CA: The Alemany Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1991). Coping with multicultural illiteracy: A teacher education response. *Social Education*, 55(3), 186-194.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206-214.
- Law, B., & Eckes, M. (1990). *The more than just surviving handbook. ESL for every classroom teacher*. Winnipeg, MB: Peguis Publishers.
- Nieto, S. (1999a). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Nieto, S. (1999b). What does it mean to affirm diversity? *School Administrator*, 56(5), 32.
- Nieto, S. (2000a). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
- Nieto, S. (2000b). Placing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 180-187.
- Nieto, S. (2002). Profoundly multicultural questions. *Educational Leadership*, 60(4), 6-10.
- Nieto, S. (2003). What keeps teachers going? *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 14-18.
- Nieto, S. (2005). Public education in the twentieth century and beyond: High hopes, broken promises, and an uncertain future. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(1), 43-64.
- Nieto, S. (2006). Solidarity, courage and heart: What teacher educators can learn from a new generation of teachers. *Intercultural Education*, 1(5), 457-473.
- Nieto, S. (2009). From surviving to thriving. *Educational Leadership*, 66(5), 8-13.
- One-stop immigrant welcoming centre opens in Saskatoon. (2009, May). *Canada Immigration News*. Retrieved from <http://www.immigration.ca/news-may09-saskatoon.asp>
- Shore, K. (2001). Success for ESL students. *Instructor* (1999), 110(6), 30-32.
- Sound off: What has been the biggest key to the province's growing population? (2008, March 27). *Canada.com Story Tools*. Retrieved from <http://www.canada.com/reginaleaderpost/story.html?id=d7ba185e-9338-4e9d-ae9c-5d1a6126d045&k=20175>
- Tomlinson, C. (2003). *Fulfilling the promise of the differentiated classroom: Strategies and tools for responsive reading*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Yoon, B. (2008). Uninvited guests: The influence of teachers' roles and pedagogies on the positioning of English language learners in the regular classroom. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(2), 495-522.
- York, S. (2008). Culturally speaking: English language learners. *Library Media Connection*, 26(7), 26-28.

Multicultural Connections

Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan
<http://mcos.sask.com/members.html>

Regina Open Door Society
<http://www.rods.sk.ca/>

SaskCulture
http://www.saskculture.sk.ca/cultural_network/Profiles_index.htm

Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages
<http://www.heritagelanguages.sk.ca/schools/html>

Saskatoon Open Door Society
<http://www.sods.sk.ca/links.php>

2317 Arlington Avenue
Saskatoon SK Canada S7J 2H8
Phone: 306-373-1660
Toll Free: 1-800-667-7762
Fax: 306-374-1122
Email: mcdowell@stf.sk.ca

www.mcdowellfoundation.ca