A CASE STUDY ON MULTI-LEVEL LANGUAGE ABILITY GROUPINGS IN AN ESL SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM: ARE WE MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES?

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

This research examines a multi-level language ability ESL secondary school classroom in relation to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice and Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) L2 motivation conceptual frameworks. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were employed. Case study data were collected through monthly interviews, semi-monthly observations, and monthly written journals over 3 months in Toronto from 6 participants (5 students and 1 teacher). Also, students who had been in Canada 5 years or less, and ESL teachers were invited to complete an on-line questionnaire. Results indicate that the multi-level classroom positively and negatively impacts participation and motivation. Participants define the most striking factor to impact participation and motivation as themselves; this links the two conceptual frameworks because “self-regulation” in the Actional Phase (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998) can be better understood by legitimate peripheral participation or the ability to “imagine” and “align” oneself (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In this multi-level classroom, self-regulation is when students actively imagine possible selves who are aligned with their family or peer goals, or when faced with disengagement, students envision new roles for themselves in the classroom to overcome barriers and realign themselves with shared family or peer goals. In these cases, alignment drives imagination; however, students also use imagination to create alignment. When lower level learners see advanced students as possible selves, they feel hope for their future. Similarly, advanced learners recall their past selves when seeing their lower level peers and
feel empathy for them. This interaction cements student alignment and sets a context conducive to cooperative learning which enhances students’ abilities to remain aligned with their families. Overall, this research highlights the interplay of imagination and alignment which impacts student identity. Moreover, it reveals that one aspect of the Post-actional Phase in Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) model, “self-concept beliefs,” can be enhanced by the notion of identity in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) framework. Finally, these findings could serve to change policy and improve programming and serve as an archive for future research.
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Prologue

My unwavering desire for choosing this research topic is based on a reoccurring image of a multi-level classroom from 2002. It is the image of a group of at least 30 English language learners of all levels of language proficiency sitting shoulder to shoulder in a portable classroom learning English. I was called there to do an on-call and as I stood there watching the students, I asked myself, “How can they possibly gain the English they need to survive in this environment?” Because of its challenging nature, it was known as the class that nobody wanted to teach. It was usually the inexperienced teacher who was assigned to that classroom because it was assumed that the new teacher would not complain about this assignment since he or she would be happy just to be employed.

As well, my own experiences as an immigrant in Spain drove me to pursue this topic. In 1999, I left Canada to discover if the European life was for me. Through my journey, I became acutely aware of my need to have a sense of belonging. Therefore, one of my main questions was, “How do I get accepted in this culture?” Although I spoke Spanish, it was Spanish from Latin America. To make matters worse, I had found a job in Barcelona. This means that I did not speak the official language of Cataluña: Catalán. Through this struggle, I began to examine other key barriers that I faced in this society which would prevent me from fully participating. At the forefront of my mind were the trials of surviving the immigration process which dragged on for over a year. One of my favourite images is of me being in a line which stretches for three blocks where I am the only white woman surrounded by no one who shares my language. I can find humour in this flashback when I recall the time when a Spanish immigration officer approached me and asked, “Miss, are you sure you are in the correct line?” “Oh, yes, I am sir.” As I stood there for hours, I watched how immigrants who could not communicate with the immigration officers were turned away because they did not have the proper paperwork regardless of the fact that they had spent their entire day in that line-up. On my second time visiting this line up, I became very aware of another barrier: bribery. On this occasion, a Spanish friend accompanied me and he managed to get us up to a clerk who held the magic tickets to get upstairs. My friend led me away from the line to a tobacco shop. Soon, we arrived at the clerk’s window again with the “goods.” My friend grabbed the ticket and we proceeded
upstairs. “How can I jump in front of all of those poor people outside?” “That’s how you get things done!” This was a barrier for my conscience. I felt my identity shift. This is not good.

If I stayed, I would be limited to one job for at least three years which barely paid me enough to survive; I did not have full health care insurance. Therefore, I became the most thrifty that I have ever been. I counted my change relentlessly. I wore my leotards which were full of holes. I did not invite my friends for dinner or coffee anymore. I had to think of my own survival. I asked myself, “Who am I becoming? How has my identity been impacted? I feel selfish. I don’t like this me.” With this recognition, I felt my world growing smaller. This was not why I had come to Europe. I had wanted to expand my world. As my enthusiasm and motivation began to deteriorate for my new life in Spain, I faced the ultimate barrier when I found out that it would take ten years as an immigrant before I had all of the rights of a Spaniard. I chose to end my European quest.

As I describe my experience, people always ask me why I stayed on even when the struggles were so great. It was because I imagined that better times were ahead. I could see other Stephanies thriving in Spain. However, I was not aligned with anyone else so my support network only consisted of kind friends who wished me well, but who could not relate to the struggles of an immigrant. At the same time, I was tugged by my alignment with my loving family waiting for me on the other side of the Atlantic. My alignment with them took over when I could no longer sustain my imagination of positive experiences in Spain. Therefore, when reflecting on this experience, I have become aware of the importance of imagination and alignment in my own journey. Although I did not have a sense of alignment which sustained my life in Spain, I now have an alignment with my immigrant students who struggle here in Canada. I can reflect on images of my past self in Spain which drives my empathy for them and aligns us in their journey here in Canada.
Glossary

**ELL**: refers to students who are learning English as an additional language.

**ESL**: refers to English as a Second Language. Currently it is used for referring to course material; however, on occasion, it is used to reference students as well.

**ESL A**: refers to the course where students are very beginner English language learners.

**ESL B**: refers to the course where students are beginner English language learners.

**ESL C**: refers to the course where students are intermediate English language learners.

**ESL D**: refers to the course where students are intermediate-advanced English language learners.

**ESL E**: refers to the course where students are advanced English language learners.

**GLS**: Learning Strategies course in Ontario secondary curriculum.

**L1**: refers to a first language

**L2**: refers to a second language

**Language proficiency**: refers to the degree to which a person understands, speaks, reads or writes a language.

**LINC**: refers to The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program which provides free basic French and English language courses to adult permanent residents. It is provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

**Scaffolding**: refers to assistance which enables permits learner performance and involves building on learners' prior knowledge such as their first or additional languages.

**SIOP**: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol - The SIOP model is a formula for sheltered English instruction that also promotes the language development of the learners.

**TESL**: refers to TESL Ontario which is a non-profit organization serving the needs of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD)
Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

The Greater Toronto Area has more foreign-born residents than any other city in Canada: “immigrants in the city are from approximately 170 countries speaking more than 100 languages” (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2005, p. 1). In fact, as the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (no date) highlights, immigration will likely increase: “with recent federal commitments to higher levels of immigration, the numbers will definitely go up. Immigration is hugely important to Canada’s cultural and economic prosperity…” (p. 1). Through their research with the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Johnson, Pascal and Rettig (2005) also stress how the system must extend itself to actively support these new immigrants: “the stakes have been raised because of a renewed federal plan to achieve the goal of raising annual immigration levels to 1 percent of the population over the next five years… about 340,000 new immigrants each year…” (p. 2).

With these demographics, there has been and will continue to be, an increased demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. However, according to the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005), there has not been an increase in adequate ESL programming:

“…we are not only witnessing a lack of progress in this area, but also are actually losing ground. Over the past years, ESL programs and support structures for immigrants have been steadily eroding through deep and damaging cuts. The long-term costs of failing to address this critical situation are too great.” (p. 1)

Similarly, the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association comments on the state of ESL programming: “the cuts to education funding in the 1990’s took a heavy toll on these services and it is only in the last couple of years that this is turning around. We’re concerned that the turn-around is not on a scale or at a pace that matches the need” (p. 2). Moreover, the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (no date) call for the Federal government to guarantee funding for immigrant youth:

“…children don’t seem to enter the equation…yes, the provinces are responsible for education but the federal government is equally responsible for creating the level playing field that will allow immigrant children and youth to take full advantage of that education and as a result, become full participants in Canadian society.” (pp. 4-5)
Even though there has been much criticism over the years around ESL programs, People for Education (2008) still notes that the needs have not been addressed: “Many, if not most, immigrants come to Canada in search of a brighter future for their children. But in Ontario there remains a wide gap between the percentage of students who require English language support and the percent actually receiving it” (p. 20).

It should be noted that, throughout this research, these immigrant youth or English Language Learners (ELLs) are primarily referred to as ESL students because that is the label with which they identify themselves in their classes. Through examining some resource books for language learning, one observes that the term ELL is relatively popular; yet, there are still many other terms being used. For example, Coelho (2003), Echevarria and Graves (1998), and Hill, Little, and Sims (2004) use the term ELL. Similarly, in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s publication (2005), this transition in terminology is described: “the term English language learner has come into increasing use internationally among educators and researchers because it distinguishes the students themselves from the programs that support their language learning needs” (p. 48). However, Farrell (2006) and Peregoy and Boyle (1997) use both ELL and ESL interchangeably. Likewise, Zainuddin, Yahya, Morales-Jones and Ariza (2002) provide commentary on the use of varied terminology throughout their book:

We will use the terms English learners and English language learners, non-native English speakers, and second language learners synonymously. The terms English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are often used to refer to the acquisition of English as a non-native language. We continue to use the former term because it is widely used and descriptive, even though what we refer to as a ‘second language’ might actually be a student’s third or fourth language. A synonym for ESL that you will find in this book is English Language Development (ELD). (p. 3)

Similarly, Gonzalez, Yawkey, and Minaya-Rowe (2006) use ESL in their title and show many other terms in their table of contents: “Second Language Learners,” “English Speakers of Other Languages,” “English Language Learners,” “English Learners,” and “Linguistically Diverse Student” (pp. iv-v). Equally, Herrera and Murry (2005) comment on the diversity in terminology: “those students whose cultures or languages are different from that of the dominant culture or language in the U.S. society are variously described with terms English language learner (ELL), English as a second or other language (ESOL), limited English proficient (LEP), and more” (p. 4). Leung (2005) also highlights other terminology:
...recent developments in the use of English in different contexts have made these terms increasingly difficult to apply.... For the future, terms such as ‘English as an additional language’ (EAL) and “English for Speakers of Other Languages” …are probably preferable because they are less weighed down with history, and because they signal the possibility of defining English from the standpoint of the users/learners. (p. 121)

However, Herrera and Murry (2005) reject all of these terms and adopt what they describe as “the cross-culturally respectful term” (p. 4): culturally and linguistically diverse student (CLD). Hence, when examining all of these publications, there is no consensus on the terminology.

Regardless of how we label these students, the reality is that, in some Ontario secondary schools, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes have grown to numbers surpassing 35 students and most ESL classes consist of more than 20 students (Kalinowski, 2002). This state of ESL programming is regrettable considering that some ESL students may also be “at-risk.” According to Brown (2006), “at-risk” means students who complete fewer credits than are required per year: “Grade 9 At-risk (6 or fewer credits) and Grade 10 At-risk (14 or fewer credits).” Typically, students in Grade 9 and 10 are required to complete 8 credits per year. In Brown’s (2005) 5-year analysis of the School Board Grade 9 cohort of Fall 2000, a number of groups of students are “identified as having higher proportions of at-risk students in Year 1 of secondary school (Grade 9), and likewise with a lower proportion of graduates, and/or higher proportion of dropouts, at the end of Year 5” (p. 11). In particular, Brown’s (2005) research shows students born in Central and South America, Mexico, and Eastern Africa as notably at-risk. In addition, Brown (2006) cites students “who move schools after Grade 9 [as being] more at-risk than those who stay in the same school” (p. iv). It must be indicated that many ESL secondary school students can fall under one or both of these categories: some arrive from Latin America or Africa and many come from their L1 countries after Grade 9. Therefore, with some ESL classes having large numbers of students along with the possibility of at-risk students, one must question the state of ESL programming.

Also, A People for Education media release of their 2005 Secondary Tracking report states that the number of ESL teachers and programs in secondary schools is declining: “27% of schools reported having ESL…teachers, compared to 31% in 2000/01” (p. 25). This is noteworthy considering “the percentage of secondary schools reporting ESL…students has not changed significantly…over the last five years” (p. 25). However, this decline in teachers and
programming is not surprising since the Ontario Auditor General’s December, 2005 report on ESL and ELD programs relates the following information:

We found that while the Ministry provides school boards with approximately $225 million a year of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) grants…the Ministry had no information on how much school boards were actually spending on ESL/ELD programs. Information we received from one board indicated that more than half of its ESL/ELD funding was spent on other areas. (p. 151)

Although transparency of how the boards divert funding has improved, there still remains a shortfall in ESL programming because Boards continue to spend ESL funding elsewhere:

A number of school boards report they spend a substantial portion of their ESL funding on things like school maintenance. With this year’s funding, the province added a transparency requirement – for the first time, boards will have to report publicly on exactly how they spend their ESL money. This may be a first step in ensuring that sufficient ESL funding is available for Ontario’s newcomer students. (People for Education, 2008, p. 21)

Moreover, in other recommendations, the Ministry states that all ESL funding should be spent on ESL programs, but does not mandate it. Hence, the funding is not protected once again (People for Education, 2008, p. 21).

With this reallocation of funds to other programs, there are fewer teachers and classes:

“Nearly half of secondary schools report they have ESL students – but only one-third have ESL Teachers” (People for Education, 2008, p. 20). As a result, many ESL classes tend to be not only large in numbers, but also multi-level in language ability. Multi-level means that there is a wide range of learners from beginner students to advanced students. In a report, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (2005) identifies this issue as a gap in ESL program delivery: one point that is stressed is the need for adequate and protected funding for ESL programs and support services; they call for further research on the impact of streaming of ESL students. On a similar note, an article by McKenzie and Bullock (2005) from the Citizen Advocates for Public Education and The Community Council for Ethnocultural Equity requests that there be attention given to “ESL Delivery” at both elementary and secondary schools and by underlining their words, they stress the importance they place on grouping students with the same ability level:

Withdrawal classes should be composed of children of similar needs, similar ages, similar age-on-arrival and at the same ESL level. At the high school level, sheltered classes should also have students who are at the same or similar ESL level as each other. (p. 9)
Later in their article, they repeat this point in their recommendations for accessibility: “students must have access to ESL course and other support at their home high school at the right level, right place and right time” (p. 10).

Given that these multi-level ESL classes are a reality in many Ontario secondary schools, it is noteworthy then that there has been little investigation done on how they affect these adolescent students. In fact, most studies on multi-level groupings have been done with adults (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bell, 1994; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Hoffer & Larson, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Yoshida, 1998). For the most part, the research on multi-level language ability groupings shows that these classes tend to negatively affect learners in a variety of ways which leads some researchers to suggest that overall student motivation, participation, and identity formation and development are also impacted (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Connor, 1995; Leu, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007; Valentic, 2005; Yoshida, 1998). However, these researchers do not support their commentary with data. Also, there are a few researchers who look more favourably on multi-level groupings because they state these classroom environments allow for the following: students have more opportunities for interaction; students can mix with other students from different cultures; teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design; students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance (Bell, 1994; Hofer & Larson, 1997; Hess, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Valentic, 2005). Yet, others report multi-level classes in a negative light: academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level groupings; teachers may lose contact time with students; classroom management may be difficult; activities may be limited (Bast, 2003; Bell, 1994; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; People for Education & Toronto Parent Network, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Raimes, 1998; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Smith, 2000; Valentic, 2005; Wittgenstein, 2003). Therefore, there is no consensus on how multi-level language ability ESL classrooms affect students.

Research Problem

This study is significant in that it addresses the effect of ESL multi-level language ability secondary school classrooms on students. In addition, the research investigates how ESL multi-level language ability classrooms in a secondary school context relate to student participation
and identity formation and development as defined by the community of practice framework of “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Also, this investigation looks at the effect of ESL multi-level language ability secondary school classrooms on student motivation as defined by the Actional Phase of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation. Moreover, through this study, it may be shown that these two conceptual models can be linked together: Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) draw on Wenger’s (1998) work as a future direction in L2 motivation research as it pertains to self-regulatory motivational strategies and identity.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study are five-fold; they are derived from the literature and from my personal experiences as an ESL teacher and curriculum leader. The following are the five main questions as well as sub-questions which guide this study:

➢ What is the nature of the overall experience of ESL students in a multi-level classroom with regard to the eight key issues that emerge in the multi-level language groupings literature?

Eight Key Issues:

1. academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level grouping;
2. teachers may lose contact time with students;
3. classroom management may be difficult;
4. activities may be limited;
5. students have more opportunities for interaction;
6. students may mix with other students from different cultures;
7. teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design;
8. students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance.

➢ What is the nature of the ESL students’ experience with their course material in a multi-level classroom?

➢ What is the nature of the ESL students’ experiences with their teacher in a multi-level classroom?

➢ What is the nature of the ESL students’ experiences with their peers in a multi-level classroom?

➢ What is the nature of the overall experience of the ESL subject teacher in a multi-level classroom?
• What is the nature of the ESL subject teacher’s experience with his or her teaching material in a multi-level classroom?
• What is the nature of the ESL subject teacher’s relationship with his or her students in a multi-level classroom?
- What is the nature of ESL students’ participation in a multi-level classroom?
  • What factors enhance students’ ability to belong to a community of practice?
  • What factors inhibit students’ ability to belong to a community of practice?
- What is the nature of ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom?
  • What factors make students feel most motivated?
  • What factors make students feel least motivated?
- How is the ESL students’ identity formation and development affected by their degree of participation in a multi-level classroom?
  • How do students perceive themselves in the classroom?
  • How do students view themselves in the school community?
  • How do students see themselves outside of the school community?
  • What labels or roles do students attribute to themselves?

Research Context

In this section, three contexts that frame this research are highlighted: the City of Toronto, the School Board, and the ESL Program at the secondary school. Yin (2003) comments on the importance of situating your case: “...the complete case is one in which the boundaries of the case-that is, the distinction between the phenomenon being studied and its context-are given explicit attention (p. 162).” Similarly, Schumacher and McMillan (1993) stress the importance of describing the context of the study: “presenting the context is essential for readers to understand the study and for extending the understandings acquired to future research or practices” (p. 506). Likewise, Merriam (1998) states that the researcher has an obligation to provide enough description of the case study’s context to enable another researcher to compare his or her study to this particular case; hence, external validity is enhanced.

The City of Toronto

According to Statistics Canada (2007), of the million plus immigrants who arrived in Canada from 2001-2006, Ontario was home to 52.3% of these immigrants. In fact, it is reported that “one third are under the age of 19, and three-quarters from countries where English is not the
first language” (People for Education, 2008, p. 20). According to Statistics Canada (2007), of the immigrants who live in Ontario, 46% of them chose Toronto as their residence in 2001-2006. Therefore, after Miami, Toronto is ranked as the second most multicultural city in the world (Wikimedia Foundation, 2006a). In the 2001 Canadian Census, it was shown that 49.4% of Toronto’s population consists of immigrants; by the 2006 Canadian Census, 50% were called immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2007). Of the immigrant population, 10.8% were immigrants who arrived in 2001-2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Statistics Canada (2005) predicted that by 2012, the visible minority population will be the majority in Toronto (Wikimedia Foundation, 2006a).

According to the Canadian Census (2001), the top 5 ethnic groups who make up the visible minority are the Chinese at 10.6%, the South Asians at 10.3%, the Blacks at 8.3%, the Filipinos at 3.5% and the Hispanics at 2.2%. By 2006, Statistics Canada shows that Toronto’s population consists of 12% South Asians, 11.4% Chinese, 8.4% Black, 4.1% Filipino and 2.6% Latin American. According to the Wikimedia Foundation (2006a), it is noteworthy that of the visible minority population, 80% originate from Asia. However, most ethnic groups in the world are represented by the communities in Toronto. According to the 2006 Census, in 2001, 57.7% of Torontonians spoke English only as their mother tongue while by 2006, only 54.1% spoke English only as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2007).

*The School Board*

According to the School Board (2009a), it was created on January 1, 1998, following the amalgamation of seven other Boards of Education. This makes it the largest School Board in Canada and one of the largest in North America. The School Board offers elementary, secondary, and adult education: there are 451 elementary schools with 181,000 students; there are 104 secondary schools with 89,000 students; there are 5 adult schools with 14,000 students. Of these students, 53% have a language other than English as their first language. More than 80 languages are present in the schools. More than 30% of all students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 different countries. As well, more than 10% of all students have been in Canada for 3 years or less. More specifically, Yau and O’Reilly (2006) report that almost half of the students in the secondary panel were born outside of Canada: 42% (p. 8). When considering racial background in the secondary schools, the percentages are as follows: 33% White, 19% South Asian, 20% East Asian, 12% Black, 5% Mixed, 3% Southeast Asian, 2% Latin American, and 3% Aboriginal (p. 12).
The ESL Program at Parkdown

Parkdown is a semested secondary school that is known for its strong academic programs. In particular, it is recognized for having the following special features: an Advanced Placement Program for enriched programs in such areas as calculus, economics, computer studies, French and English literature for senior students, a Gifted Program which is part of the Special Education program designed to meet the needs of students who are identified as gifted, a specialized program in mathematics, computer technology, English and science, and a wide variety of co-curricular activities including athletics, the arts, robotics, cultural clubs, and student government. As of the spring 2009, the population of the school was 1107; 56% are male and 44% female. Of the student body, approximately 65% of the students speak English as an additional language, and of this group, 20% of these students were born outside of Canada and have been living in Canada for less than 5 years; 9% have been in Canada for 2 years or less while 11% have been in Canada for 3 to 4 years. According to a document entitled, Enrolment-Listing of Student Demographics (2009b), of the recent arrivals, 25% speak Russian, 14% speak Tagalog, 8% speak Hebrew and Korean, and 5% speak Chinese and Spanish, 3% Turkish, and the rest of the English language learners speak a variety of languages (pp.1-15). A document relating mother tongues spoken at the school indicates that 33% of the student population speak English as a first language, 14% speak Russian as a first language, 12% speak Chinese and Korean as first languages, and 5% speak Tagalog as a first language. The rest of the population is highly multi-cultural and therefore, speak a variety of languages as their first language (XXX School Board, 2009c).

According to the School Plan, one of its goals is to “expand course selections for ESL students.” However, in reality it is always a struggle to supply a full range of ESL English courses and ESL subject specific courses that cover the wide range of English language ability levels. This conflicts with the Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines that clearly outline the ESL curriculum as having a full range of classes for the most beginner (ESL A) to the most advanced (ESL E) (Ministry of Education and Training (MET), 2007). Moreover, on average 30 to 40 new registrations occur during the year and these numbers are not always taken into consideration when determining course offerings.

When timetabling the ESL students, they are typically placed in an ESL English class each semester appropriate to their language ability level. The rest of their timetable tends to be
filled by multi-level ESL subject specific courses and other classes with native speakers of English. The multi-level ESL subject specific courses include civics/careers, computer and information science, drama, French, geography, history, introduction to anthropology, psychology and sociology, learning strategies, mathematics, and science; however, at times these ESL subject classes are collapsed into regular classes when administrators deem the numbers of students to be too low. Potentially, the multi-level subject classes with a wide range of ability levels could be made more multi-level if combined with native speakers in a regular classroom.

Generally, as ESL students’ levels of language proficiency increase, more classes with native speakers of English are included in their timetables. Also, when students are in ESL A or ESL B, guidance counsellors avoid placing them in the ESL subject specific classes that require a lot of written work such as geography, history, and introduction to anthropology, psychology and sociology; however, again, it must be recognized that all of this is dependent on the number of sections and the arrangement of the courses. There are often problems with timetabling, especially with ESL A or ESL B students. These students end up in classes that are not appropriate for them or at times, they have no scheduled classes available for them. This point stresses that more ESL A or ESL B appropriate classes are needed. This addition of classes is not an easy task considering the School Board’s frequent funding cuts.

The co-curricular activities that are specific to ESL students are the ESL Ambassadors’ Club and the ESL Drama Club. The ESL Ambassadors’ Club has been functioning for the last 6 years, and welcomes new students to the school by pairing them with a student who shares their first language. The ESL Drama Club has been a part of the school for the last 4 years and has just produced two videos outlining the ESL students’ experiences as new immigrants. Other clubs in which ESL students may participate include a variety cultural clubs such as Russian, Korean, Jewish, and Hispanic. As well, ESL students often participate in an evening event that celebrates multiculturalism with ethnic crafts, food, and entertainment.

Research Rationale and Contributions

These multi-level language ability groupings in ESL classes have caused significant ESL program dissatisfaction on the part of both students and staff at Parkdown where I am the ESL/International Languages Assistant Curriculum Leader. More specifically, teachers have especially complained about the difficulty in preparing lessons, fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum, and giving extra help to these students. Similarly, ESL students have voiced concern
about covering the curriculum, getting help from their teachers, and feeling isolated in the classroom. As a result of this dissatisfaction, the School Planning Committee, in conjunction with the staff, asked that ESL classes be streamed into appropriate language ability groupings. This was one of the key areas of focus in our School Plan (Parkdown, 2003). Hence, when I assumed the position as a curriculum leader of ESL/International Languages in 2003, I rallied for more homogenous-level English classes for the ESL students. A point of interest is that this action correlated with a jump in our Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test scores from 78% in 2003 to 89% in 2004. Generally, scores have remained higher than in 2003. Yet, the multi-level classes in the other ESL subject specific classes still exist such as geography, history, drama, learning strategies, civics/careers, mathematics, science, anthropology/psychology. Therefore, the effect of these classes on students is unknown and there is a need to understand why these types of classes have brought such frustration to both ESL students and teachers in our secondary school. Moreover, as an educator, there is a need for me to question the policy makers’ choices regarding the ESL curriculum structure. Cummins (2000) calls for educators to question the structure and policies of classes that prevent engagement in the classroom: “… [question] the structure of a school system and a policy framework that excludes ELL students from any meaningful participation in the instructional process” (p. 251).

In fact, this type of research has been called for by the Ontario Auditor General’s Report (2005) when it recommends that the Ministry monitor ESL services and supports:

RECOMMENDATION

To help ensure that the Ministry and school boards can identify which English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and English-Literacy-Development (ELD) services and supports are the most effective and economical in meeting student needs, the Ministry should:

• require that school boards collect and report the information necessary to relate student progress and outcomes to the type, amount, and cost of the ESL/ELD services and supports they received;
• co-ordinate and facilitate efforts to identify and promote best practices, and evaluate the need for, and benefits of, additional services and supports; and
• monitor the outcomes for ESL/ELD students, such as graduation rates and progress after graduation.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees that it is important to track the progress of students who are learning English in order to ensure that school programs are providing the required support.
The policy being developed will consider (1) providing criteria for identifying English-language learners, (2) describing procedures for data collection to enable tracking these students as a group, and (3) using this information to identify the most effective programs and approaches. (p. 161)

Hence, this research may serve to support the Ministry’s initiative for data collection on ESL students.

In addition, little investigation has been done on the effect of ESL multi-level ability groupings in a secondary school context which was also stated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (1982): “the limited literature on the topic…” (p. 5). It is remarkable that, even after almost 30 years, there is still is little research on the topic:

I agree with the author that there hasn’t been enough data-based research on the topic multi-level (and often multi-age) students’ learning experiences and outcomes and it’s obviously a highly problematic area, in practice, for all stakeholders and a very intriguing one for theory and research in second language acquisition, socialization, and education as well. (Duff, 2010, p. 1)

Also, as previously mentioned, when conducting a literature review, it is clear that most of the research has been done with adult ESL learners. This is concerning because some statistics provided by Ontario Public and Roman Catholic School Boards (2001) show approximately 12,000 students were designated as ESL students in the 2000-2001 year. It should be highlighted that these students may have different levels of proficiency in English. On a similar note, the Ontario Auditor General’s report (2005) shows that over the 5-year period of 2000-2004, Ontario has received on average 57,000 immigrants each year who speak little or no English. A further breakdown shows that 5373 or approximately 10% are school-aged 14-19 year old students, who are being placed in programs such as multi-level language ability classes:

People for Education’s tracking data show that students in urban schools are still experiencing serious deficits in ESL programs, large class sizes in elementary and high school…As long as school boards continue to experience funding shortfalls, they will continue to use funding for students at risk to bridge the funding gap. (People for Education, 2005, p. 10)

Therefore, as programming continues to be impacted by funding shortfalls (People for Education, 2008), resulting in the creation of multi-level ESL classes, there is a clear need to understand how this type of programming affects such a large number of adolescent students each year. Therefore, this case study research of one school’s experience might provide data that would enable educators to better understand this issue. This is crucial considering that many
ESL secondary school students are at-risk of dropping out of school: “In the higher grades the pressure on students is even greater. They require even more sophisticated language skills to cope with more complex concepts and texts. For many newcomer students, success at school is an academic longshot” (People for Education, 2005, p. 4).

As well, case study research is known for its archival nature which serves to support future research. Several case studies can be brought together to form an archive on the impact of how issues of participation, access, and identity are a key part of a community of practice research. Therefore, this research can also serve as a reference for future multi-level classroom studies which utilize community of practice and motivation frameworks. It highlights the relationship among student participation, identity formation and development, and motivation in multi-level ESL subject classrooms. There is a paucity of data on their relationship; researchers and educators have only speculated on this relationship (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Connor, 1995; Leu, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007; Valentic, 2005; Yoshida, 1998).

Finally, this study provides insight into the development of a new second language education conceptual framework or the expansion of two existing frameworks: legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and the Actional Phase of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) L2 Process model of motivation. In a discussion of significant areas for future motivational research, Dörnyei (2005) proposes that “self-regulatory strategies”, one of the key components of the Actional Phase, can be linked to the work of Wenger (1998) and Norton (2001) through the notion of ‘imagination’ as a mode of belonging to a community. More recently, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) edited a book which brings together several quantitative and qualitative studies which show how “…L2 motivation is currently being radically reconceptualised and retheorised in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009, p. 1). In particular, imagination permeates the studies linked to self and identity where the notion of “possible selves” or “future self-guides” represent images of who individuals might or want to become or who they are afraid of becoming. These images also act as guides for moving individuals from the present to the future. Moreover, the community of practice work of Lave and Wenger (1991) is linked to some of these studies; however, there is no holistic view of the community of practice framework with a focus on legitimate peripheral participation with regard to motivation,
but rather only aspects of the framework are mentioned. This study examines the *entire* community of practice framework and how it relates to the Actional Phase of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) L2 Process model of motivation.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review/Conceptual Frameworks

This literature review is divided into three sections. Each section contributes to the rationale for the research by illustrating the importance of addressing the research problem and by verifying the lack of information on the topic. The first section examines the literature on “mixed ability” classes and then centres on multi-level language ability classrooms. The second section looks at one conceptual framework relevant to the study: community of practice and in particular, the notion of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The third section focuses on the second conceptual framework: Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation and more specifically, the Actional Phase of this model. This stage of the model is particularly relevant to multi-level groupings in an ESL class because it focuses specifically on the classroom setting where it is essential to maintain and protect student motivation for L2 learning. The literature review concludes with a discussion on how this study may be able to connect the two conceptual frameworks: this conceptual connection contributes to both the area of L2 motivation and community of practice.

Multi-level Language Ability Groupings

This first section focuses on the literature of multi-level ability groupings in second language classes. However, before presenting this literature, it is important to note that multi-level ability groupings classes can be situated within the literature on mixed-ability classes.

Mixed-ability Classes

When conducting a literature review on mixed-ability classes, it is clear that this descriptor is widely used by international educators and researchers. This descriptor tends to look at students who have similar backgrounds, who are in the same grade, but divided by their ability in a subject area. In particular, there has been an abundance of work on this topic done in the United Kingdom (Aylett, 2000; Berkley, 2001; Boaler, William, & Brown, 2000; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Hallam, Ireson, & Davies, 2004; Ireson, Hallam, Hack, Clark, & Plewis, 2002; MacIntyre & Ireson, 2002; Scott & McKendrick, 2001; Venkatakrishnan, & William, 2003; Wall, 2004; Ward, 2005). In contrast, less research has been done in the North American context using this descriptor (Desimone, Smith, & Ueno, 2006; Levinson, 2003; Mackenzie, 2005; Nemko, 2004). Moreover, most studies are quantitative in nature whereby data collection has been conducted primarily through the use of surveys and according to Aylett (2000), tend to not consider the views of pupils (Hallam, Ireson, & Davies, 2004; Berkley, 2001; Hallam & Ireson,
2005). In addition, a great deal of the research done on mixed ability classes pertains to children in elementary school while there is little research on adults and adolescents (Hallam, Ireson, & Davies, 2004, MacIntyre & Ireson, 2002, Nemko, 2004; Trautwein, Ulrich, Köller, & Kämmerer, 2002; Wall, 2004; Ward, 2005). Also, studies done on this topic have been conducted in several subject areas. However, the key area of focus for mixed-ability classes’ research is mathematics (Desimone, Smith, & Ueno, 2006; Ireson, Hallam, Hack, Clark, & Plewis, 2002; MacIntyre & Ireson, 2002; Trautwein, Ulrich, Köller, & Kämmerer, 2002).

Following these subject areas, there are some investigations on literacy, and teacher development, and only a few studies on second language learning. Overall, the findings are conflicting as to whether mixed-ability classes raise test scores: “the findings of research on the relative merits of heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings are mixed” (Venkatakrishnan, & William, 2003, p. 201). Some studies also show that mixed-ability classes may positively impact students’ self-concept since homogeneous higher level classes produce high pressure and homogeneous lower level classes provide limited opportunities (Boaler, William, & Brown, 2000); however, other studies point out that teachers “may be in a position to reduce this problem by the particular way the ability grouping is organised” (Macintyre, & Ireson, 2002, p. 262). Finally, Hallam, Ireson, and Davies (2004) provide a summary that describes the complexity of ability grouping and calls for decisions on these matters to be made locally:

> Overall, the findings support the view there is no simple recipe for taking decisions about how to group pupils…the nature of particular subject domains and tasks within them require the adoption of different strategies and the patterns of social interchanges between pupils in any single class may require the teacher to manipulate groupings to maximize on-task behaviour. The particular expertise of individual teachers and the support they may have from teaching assistants or parents will also play a part. Given this level of complexity, only those who have extensive knowledge of the particular circumstances prevailing in a school, i.e., the staff, are in a position to take account of all the information and make informed decisions. (p. 137)

**Multi-level Classes**

In contrast, the term, multi-level classes, is not used as frequently as mixed-ability classes to describe classes with a variety of students at different ability levels. In fact, it seems that this term is more common to the North American context and more specific to second language classes. However, research on this topic is similar to mixed-ability classes’ investigations in that there are almost no studies on multi-level classes in secondary schools. Most research has been
done with adult second language learners. Likewise, the majority of the research is either done through a quantitative lens, which mirrors the mixed ability classes’ investigations, or based on teacher practices without any empirical evidence. Hence, when considering both the mixed ability and multi-level classes’ literature, this research is noteworthy in that it contributes to the field because this case study research is primarily interpretive in nature. This research paradigm focuses on the individual and aims to “understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 22). Over a semester, data is collected on adolescents and their teacher in a multi-level language ability ESL class in a Canadian context and the data yields information from the participants’ point of view.

In general, the literature on multi-level classes reveals that these classes tend to have a negative effect on students in that their participation and motivation are impacted (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Connor, 1995; Leu, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007; Valentic, 2005; Yoshida, 1998). Nevertheless, there are a few researchers who look more favourably on multi-level groupings (Bell, 1994; Hofer & Larson, 1997; Hess, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Valentic, 2005). Yet, the issues in these studies are still refuted by others (Bast, 2003; Bell, 1994; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; People for Education & Toronto Parent Network, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Raimes, 1998; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Smith, 2000; Valentic, 2005; Wittgenstein, 2003).

Overall, eight key issues emerge in the literature review on multi-level classes. The issues which suggest that multi-level classes negatively impact students’ participation and motivation are along these lines: academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level groupings; teachers may lose contact time with students; classroom management may be difficult; activities may be limited. In contrast, the issues which paint a more favourable picture of the multi-level classes on students’ participation and motivation are the following: students may have more opportunities for interaction; students may mix with other students from different cultures; teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design; students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance.

*Eight Key Issues*

**Academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level groupings.** Some research call for homogeneous ability levels in language classrooms (Hoffer & Larson, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Yoshida, 1998). Office of Refugee
Resettlement (1982) recommends that teachers in multi-level classes take a variety of approaches including “grouping according to skill abilities” (p. 1). Maddalena (2002) shows that when Japanese university students in academic classes are asked for their opinions about ability-level groupings, these students prefer more homogeneous groupings. Similarly, in Yoshida’s (1998) study, he lists the participants’ comments to show their preference for homogeneous groupings: “Features to avoid in an [English for Specific Purposes] ESP program: mixing students of different language levels and skills of interest in the same class” (p. 3). Yoshida points out that student voices often go unheard: “One activity…educators often overlook…is consultation with the learners who will and/or have benefited from the proposed program…” (p. 71). Likewise, drawing on her experiences with adult ESL learners, Bell (1994) implies that decisions for these class groupings are often not driven by the needs of students: “Setting up multi-level classes relieves them [administration] of the obligation to perform placement testing or to provide extra classes” (p. 8). When considering this literature, since it is quantitative or based on teacher observation, it is evident that there is a need to also probe students’ feelings about homogeneous groupings. Through this interpretative research, secondary school ESL students had an opportunity to voice their opinions about preferences for homogeneous language ability classes; moreover, this research provided opportunities to explore possible reasons for these opinions.

**Teachers may lose contact time with students.** Some studies indicate that when a second language class is multi-level in nature, the teacher’s contact time with each level is reduced as compared to a homogenous single-level class and this negatively affects the students’ ability to learn the second language (Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Leu, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007). Phan Phu (2007) clearly states this lack of time as a disadvantage of the multi-level class: “there is less time for each group of students” (p. 308). Maddalena (2002) comments on the awkward feelings of a low-level ESL participant in a multi-level classroom: “[she] is reluctant to make demands within the class and fears that by continually asking for help from more advanced students and me [the teacher] that she will be responsible for monopolizing too much of the time”(p. 5). Connor (1995) also reports that there is especially a lack of contact time with the low-level students by the teacher. In addition, Hess (2001) mentions that there is a notable lack of contact time when it comes to teachers responding to students’ written work. In Ontario, People for Education and Toronto Parent Network (2001) highlight that this lack of contact time is due to a high number of students
being assigned to each teacher. In a survey done for the school year 2000-2001 in Toronto schools, it is reported that: “…the ratio of ESL student to ESL full-time teacher is 71:1… [This ratio]…increases the risk of students disconnecting from learning and from Canadian society as a whole” (p. 5). Overall, most of these educators suggest that participation and motivation could be impacted by the multi-level language ability grouping strategy in that the contact time is reduced with the teacher. This suggestion is based primarily on their observation as classroom teachers. For that reason, more investigation needed to be done to better understand this impact of a multi-level language ability classroom in relation to community of practice and motivation. My interpretative research addressed this need by collecting data through semi-structured interviews, observations, and journals about how teacher contact time affects participation and motivation of ESL secondary school students in a multi-level classroom in a Canadian context.

**Classroom management may be difficult.** Other research highlights that in a multi-level setting, there often is tension between the lower level students and the more advanced level students when the difference in language ability is significant (Bell, 1994; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Pham Phu, 2007; Valentic, 2005). In the description of the disadvantages of the multi-level classroom, Pham Phu (2007) lists “teachers have to do more work for classroom management” (p. 308). Through drawing on the context of a mathematics’ class, Bruzzese and Dedmon (1997) suggest that this tension is because students become frustrated when their needs are not being met as a result of the teacher focusing on the other groups’ needs: “A student who understands a concept does not want to wait until the others in the class ‘get it’” (p. 46). These points are supported by the research of Maddalena (2002) and Bell (1994) who draw on their experiences with ESL adult learners. Both researchers comment that lower level students often feel intimidated, while advanced students feel unchallenged, and possibly, frustrated by the curriculum because it is being adapted to the lower-level students’ needs. In a 3-week study done in a Japanese university context, Maddalena (2002) discusses this conflict between the beginner and advanced ESL students:

To S1, the higher-level students were intimidating and their ability in English only served to reinforce her fears that she shouldn’t have been in the class in the first place…Dominant class members may indeed have a demoralizing effect on the others, confirming their feelings of inadequacy…S12’s frustration results in a different, though equally significant kind of alienation. (p. 7)
This frustration often leads to a decrease in their motivation to learn a second language (Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Valentic, 2005). According to Valentic (2005), “the problems that make teaching multilevel classes difficult are large number of students, discipline, and motivation” (p. 2). Moreover, these studies imply that a decrease in motivation could also impact student participation in the classroom. However, it must be noted that most of this work is largely based on classroom teachers’ experiences and on a short data collection period (Maddalena, 2002). Hence, there needed to be a more in-depth look at how classroom management of multi-level classrooms can affect student participation and motivation. This research investigated how classroom management may affect students’ participation and motivation over the 5-month period of a semester. In particular, this research focused on the possible tensions that can exist between the lower and higher level adolescent students.

**Activities may be limited.** Some investigations suggest that when students are engaged in activities that require higher-level thinking, they should not be placed in heterogeneous groups because this grouping does not allow all students to fully participate in a wide range of activities (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bell, 1994; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Pham Phu, 2007). Pham Phu (2007) cautions that both lower and higher level students may be demotivated if they are not appropriately challenged by material. Balliro (1997b) shows special concern for the lower level learners: if students are placed in heterogeneous groups, the contribution of the lower level students is often not included in the group work. This can lead to lower level students feeling extremely alienated. Hence, their motivation to learn could be seriously affected: “…Group or pair the upper level students together and group or pair the lower level students together. That way, the lower-level students may be willing to take more risks among themselves and the upper level students can move ahead a little more quickly” (Balliro, 1997b, p. 53). Again, this research shows that motivation and participation are negatively affected by the multi-level language ability groupings. However, much of this research is based on classroom observation without any investigation of students’ feelings on the matter. Therefore, this research drew on both the perspective of the teacher, who is considered an expert in the field and who also potentially impacts the students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation in the classroom as well as the perspectives of the students. Moreover, this research is focused on the impact of a multi-level language ability classroom in relation to community of
practice and motivation used maximum variation sampling: the research drew information from a variety of students who were in the most beginner ESL to the most advanced ESL levels.

Students may have more opportunities for interaction. Based on their classroom experience, some researchers state that multi-level classes provide great opportunities for interaction (Bell, 1994; Hess, 2001; Hoffer & Larson, 1997). Bell (1994) indicates that adult newcomer multi-level classes support companionship among friends and family: “Many students do in fact prefer multi-level classes, generally because they have friends or relatives who are also interested in learning English, and they want to be assured of being in the same class” (p. 9). Hoffer and Larson (1997) describe that the multi-level classroom offers opportunities for students to form communities whereby more advanced students get to develop leadership and ground their learning by working with less advanced learners. Hoffer and Larson (1997) also see that when multi-level groups share problems with the multi-level class, collaboration is “sparked” whereby “… students have taken on such projects as building a new class and community space, advocating to get public transportation in the area, publishing community newsletters, and producing a video on domestic violence” (p. 3). Also, Hess (2001) suggests that there are many advantages to a multi-level grouping because these classes tend to be large where there are over 30 students. As a result, there will always be lots of people for interaction: “I was amazed to see how the influx of these new students, whose presence made the class infinitely more multi-leveled, increased the interest, energy-level, and linguistic output of the entire group” (p. 3). However, it should be noted that in her argument, Hess (2001) does not address the issue of how to cope with multi-level language ability groupings in large classes, but rather, she focuses only on how the number of students affects groupings.

Furthermore, even if we follow Hess’s argument, we still see that other educators discourage these large numbers in ESL classes. In an article on the state of ESL in Canadian school boards, Wittgenstein (2003) comments on the problem of overcrowding in multi-level classes in public education: “ESL programs [are] also open to ‘continuous intake’, which [means] that whenever newcomers [arrive], the ESL teachers [will] have to accept them, even if the program [is] full” (p. 7). Likewise, People for Education and Toronto Parent Network (2001) list large classroom sizes as a main concern of Ontario parents who have children in public education: “Comments from parents highlight the failings of the provincial funding model in the area of ESL…’[there has been a] dramatic increase in ESL student enrolment-[while] allocation
for ESL teachers [has] not increased”” (p. 5). Overall, these comments highlight the problems faced in both Ontario elementary and secondary schools with respect to large multi-level ESL classes. Consequently, this issue of whether students have increased opportunities for interaction in a multi-level classroom remains debatable and requires further investigation that is based on more extensive data collection. Moreover, since Bell (1994) and Hess (2001) concentrate on adults and Wittgenstein (2003) and People for Education and Toronto Parent Network (2001) focus on the public school system with adolescents and younger children, there needs to be more extensive research solely on this age group because what is true for the adult ESL learners is not necessarily true for adolescents or children. This case study research explored this issue more thoroughly by looking extensively at the adolescent learner at the age 15-18 years.

Students may mix with other students from different cultures. Based on their classroom observations, some educators propose that multi-level classes bring a rich variety of people together with different perspectives (Balliro, 1997a; Bell, 1994; Hess, 2001; Shank & Terrill, 1995). Hess (2001) states: “This wealth of dissimilarity can be used to our advantage in creating interesting, varied, meaningful, and student centred lessons” (p. 3). However, as with Hess’s (2001) previously mentioned point regarding interaction, Hess (2001) does not address the multi-level language ability nature of the class but rather, she focuses on the advantage of a large group of people coming together who are from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the issue of teaching multi-level language ability classes is not fully addressed. Regardless, this benefit of bringing together people from different cultures has been also recognized as a challenge by other second-language researchers (Bell, 1994; Shank & Terrill, 1995). In her introduction that discusses problems of multi-level classes, Bell (1994) stresses the potential for conflict:

…problems can be exaggerated if there is a situation in which the different ability groups also reflect different cultural groups, particularly those traditionally opposed to each other. Mainland Portuguese, for instance, tend to be better educated than persons from the Azores. A class with a number of Portuguese students will sometimes contain a beginner group of Azoreans sparring with a more fluent group of mainlanders. (p. 12)

Bell (1994) cautions that teachers must work to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. On a similar note, Office of Refugee Resettlement (1982) notes the presence of divergent cultural or ethnic groups… may [cause]… natural antagonism between cultural groups” (p. 8); however, teachers need to bring this issue to the surface: “One teacher reported that, after several uncomfortable weeks, the common ground on which her students could unite was the fact
that they had all fled communist regimes. Therefore, a short anti-communist discussion served to rid the class of much of its antagonistic feelings” (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982, p. 9).

Likewise, in a discussion on grouping strategies, Shank and Terrill (1995) highlight that certain difficulties may occur among students of diverse backgrounds:

Some learners might not be comfortable in groups with other learners they consider to be more prominent or of higher status. And some men may resist being in groups where women are leaders. Although the teacher can often encourage reluctant learners to try new activities, sensitivity to potential difficulties arising from group and pair work is necessary. (p. 2)

As well, Shank and Terrill (1995) suggest that class discussion of cultural and personal differences in learning styles and interaction patterns may help overcome these issues of resistance. Again, when reviewing this literature, it is clear that there is no consensus about the relationship between multi-level classes and the mixing of different cultural groups. This research shed light on this issue since in the sample selection, maximum variation sampling was used on a population which includes participants of different ability levels, and a variety of cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the data from these participants more fully revealed this issue of multi-level classes and cultural diversity on student interaction and motivation.

**Teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design.** Educators propose that multi-level classrooms typically are flexible in that teachers can determine the curriculum design (Bell, 1994; Shank & Terrill, 1995). Based on her work with adult learners, Bell (1994) comments “One of the most common advantages is that the teacher is unlikely to be forced into teaching a set syllabus” (p. 16). She further states, “To develop the syllabus into a curriculum, the teacher must decide which activities will provide the best practice of the various skills and attitudes that the students need” (p. 9). However, this commentary on the flexibility in curriculum design does not apply to a secondary school context in Ontario: the Ministry of Education determines the curriculum. In her analysis of The Ontario Curriculum Guidelines for Grades 9 to 12: ESL/ELD, Bast (2003) describes the creation and intended use of the document:

The document was the result of work done by a team of ESL professionals who tried to create a curriculum which reflected the research recommendations for second language acquisition and dealt with the realities of the classroom…It is this document which ESL/ELD teachers must follow in the delivery of ESL/ELD programs in secondary schools. (p. 2)
Hence, in a public high school context, students’ needs only influence, not dictate, the curriculum. Furthermore, Bast (2003) states that the expectations of these Curriculum Guidelines (1999) are extremely challenging for ESL students:

…If the document acknowledges the time frame required for academic language proficiency, then one might ask, what is the problem? The ‘problem’ is the fact that, while the time frame of five to seven years is noted, the ministry requirements are that a student must complete a Grade 12 mainstream English credit in order to obtain his/her diploma, and pass the Grade 10 Literacy Test. Students may only substitute up to three ESL credits for regular English credits (MET 1999, 11). In addition to that, students may only attend secondary school until the age of 21. As stated above, there are five courses for ESL and four courses for ELD. In addition to having to pass Grade 12 English, if students wish to go on to college or university, they must also sit for the TOEFL exam to prove their ability to handle an English-medium program. Thus, for students arriving at age 18 with little English, it is unlikely that they will make enough progress to graduate—a fact which the document acknowledges. For these students, their only option is to continue at Adult Day schools, or in other language programs. Even for students arriving in Grade 9, research [(Roessingh & Field, 2000)] conducted in Alberta suggests that their chances of success are limited. (p. 7)

Bast’s (2003) article reinforces that, in a secondary school setting, the Ontario Ministry of Education mandates the ESL curriculum and the teacher does not have the flexibility in designing the curriculum as Bell (1994) suggests that teachers have with adult classes. In fact, Bast (2003) points out that often teachers react negatively toward prescribed material such as course profiles: “Unfortunately, from my observations, some ESL teachers have negative feelings towards the course profiles, because they do not go far enough…” (p. 12). Given these conflicting views about the flexibility of the curriculum, this research expanded on Bast’s (2003) comments since it sheds more light on the ESL secondary school multi-level classroom context: it gives the both the teacher’s and students’ perspectives on the curriculum. In particular, the research focused on how student participation and motivation are affected by the curriculum expectations. This is key, considering that ESL students’ “chances of success are limited.”

**Students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance.** Some educators comment that multi-level classrooms provide opportunities for teachers to assume the role of facilitator and for students to self-direct their learning whereby they seek the help of their more advanced peers (Bell, 1994; Hess, 2001; Hoffer & Larson, 1997; Pham Phu, 2007; Valentic, 2005). Valentic (2005) draws on the work of Tudor (2004) which connects student motivation to students making personal connections and having choice in the curriculum.
Likewise, Pham Phu (2007) stresses that one way to counteract student demotivation in the multi-level classroom is to provide curriculum which engages “… students in the way that can help them to develop their own skills” (p. 310). Hofer and Larson (1997) also indicate that programs need to help individuals engage in what students see as beneficial to their life and the community as whole. Hess (2001) states, “In large classes, the instructor has a built-in advantage. Since there are so many levels of language ability, it is only natural that the more able students quickly assume the role of teacher-assistants” (p. 3).

This comment contrasts with the action research of Maddalena (2002) which reveals the resentment of the more-advanced student who has been put in the role of peer-assistant; he felt unchallenged and therefore, frustrated in the classroom. On the same note, other second language researchers like Raimes (1998) and Smith (2000) also disagree with this issue when it refers to the secondary school context. In an article on teaching second language writing, Raimes (1998) points out that, “A few studies find less positive results: they find that ESL students prefer feedback from a teacher to peer feedback (Zhang 1995); they raise questions about the direct effects of group work on revising (Connor and Asenavage 1994)” (p. 153). Similarly, based on 40 years of teaching experience, Smith (2000) reflects on the lack of maturity of secondary school students in self-directed learning and suggests that they need more input from their teacher. In a paper about his many years of teaching young people, Smith says, “Self-pacing became procrastination...Many students were not confident about assuming so much responsibility” (pp. 36-37). Hence, Raimes (1998) and Smith (2000) challenge the use of self-directed learning with peer helpers in a secondary school context. In particular, Smith (2000) highlights that motivation and participation are negatively impacted since “procrastination” occurs. Again, there appear to be conflicting views by researchers with regard to the role of self-directed learning in the multi-level classroom; these views are based primarily on teacher observation. Through looking at both the teacher’s and the students’ perceptions, this investigation uncovered more thoroughly the extent to which the teacher promotes this kind of environment and its impact on adolescent ESL students’ participation and motivation in the multi-level classroom.

In conclusion, multi-level language ability groupings’ literature can be placed under the umbrella term of mixed ability groupings. However, this descriptor, multi-level language ability grouping, is more specific to the North American context for second language classes. When
reviewing the literature, most of the research on multi-level language ability groupings has been done with adult learners, has been qualitative in nature or has been based on teacher classroom observation (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bell, 1994; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Hofer & Larson, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; Pham Phu, 2007; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Valentic, 2005; Yoshida, 1998). Overall, several key issues emerge that suggest that multi-level language ability groupings tend to negatively impact students’ participation and motivation. However, a few researchers do believe that there are some benefits in multi-level language groupings (Bell, 1994; Hofer & Larson, 1997; Hess, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Valentic, 2005). Regardless, some of this research can be called into question since it is refuted by others, or it has been conducted with adult learners; therefore, it cannot necessarily be applied to a secondary school context (Balliro, 1997a, 1997b; Bast, 2003; Bell, 1994; Bruzzese & Dedmon, 1997; Hoffer & Larson, 1997; Maddalena, 2002; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982; People for Education & Toronto Parent Network, 2001; Pham Phu, 2007; Raimes, 1998; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Smith, 2000; Yoshida, 1998; Wittgenstein, 2003). Hence, there was clearly a need for additional research on the experience of students in multi-level language ability classes in a secondary school context. This research needs an interpretive lens whereby it draws on students’ self-perceptions and not only teachers’ observations. Moreover, since several of these researchers and educators do suggest or indicate that participation and motivation are affected by the multi-level language groupings, more investigation needed to be conducted to better understand the link between the multi-level groupings and the issues of participation and motivation. Hence, it was reasonable to attempt to fill this gap through conducting this research which looked at multi-level groupings through the lens of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) construct of legitimate peripheral participation within a community of practice framework to provide a better understanding of the impact of multi-level groupings in a secondary school context on students’ participatory roles. In addition, Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) motivational framework, in particular, the Actional Phase was also used to see how this grouping strategy affected student motivation.

**Conceptual Framework 1: Community of Practice: Legitimate Peripheral Participation**

This second section focuses on the first conceptual framework underlying this study: community of practice and in particular, one process which facilitates entry into a community of practice known as legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).
First, community of practice is briefly defined. Then, the background is provided which outlines “intellectual traditions” and studies which have influenced the conceptual framework. After, through reviewing a recent essay by Wenger (2009), the community of practice is defined as a social learning system which shapes and is shaped by its members; it highlights the role of identity in this conceptual framework and the value in creating a process of inclusion when newcomers arrive or helping newcomers feel legitimate peripheral participation. Finally, the legitimate peripheral participation construct is defined, and related studies are referenced.

**Definition**

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a community of practice can be clearly defined:

[it is] a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice…[it] is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretative support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e., for legitimate peripheral participation). (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98)

On his website, Wenger (2006) provides a more simplified definition:

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

**Background**

In a recent essay, Wenger (2009) gives a detailed account of the community of practice. According to Wenger, in this essay, he is “trying to make some sense of the career of this perspective on learning” (E. Wenger, personal email, January 24, 2010):

It has its roots in attempts to develop accounts of the social nature of human learning inspired by anthropology and social theory (Lave, 1988; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). (Wenger, 2009, p. 1)

In his doctoral dissertation, Wenger (1990) highlights some links in his work to these researchers. For example, he relates to Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of the “habitus” which he links to the community of practice as a “central organizing principle of the world as human
societies constitute it” (Wenger, 1990, p. 146). He explains that Bourdieu’s (1977) habitus is connected to the community of practice but it differs in that it looks at wider social principles rather than looking at specific cases:

[Bourdieu] has developed the closely related concept of the habitus, a set of cultural principles that generate in a coherent fashion the modes of activities, the life style and tastes, and the interests of a group, usually a social class. It is for him the determinant factor in the way people shape their sense-making. I find the habitus to be a very useful concept. But the habitus differs from the notion of community of practice in being one of these broad structural principles, an emerging property of the social world. As such, it tends to overlook the social forms that we construct locally as we engage in practice and in reflection on practice. It overlooks the day-to-day mechanisms of co-participation in practice, of construction of the self in perceptible communities that give it local coherence through shared practice (p. 146).

As well, Wenger (1990) indicates that aspects of his community of practice conceptual framework are directly related to the work of Giddens (1979). In particular, this link can be seen through his views on how power relations in a community of practice impact learning in a dynamic fashion:

While practice structures activities, engagement in it can thus never be considered the mere automated implementation of structures, like the execution of a computer program, but the situated negotiation of meaning through embodied activity. And its social and negotiated nature constantly implies moments of reflection in these activities and on their relation to the practice (see Giddens, 1979). (p. 149)

Likewise, Wenger (1990) notes the importance of reflection as part of Giddens’ work which is key to his research on the mode of belonging, imagination, in the conceptual framework of legitimate peripheral participation: “Continual moments of reflection in action are the device that Giddens (1979) uses to attribute to agents a form of knowledge of the social structures their activities reproduce” (Wenger, 1990, p. 154). In addition, Foucault’s (1980) work is mentioned as it relates to power relations being dictated by “normative structures” (Wenger, 1990, p. 175). Wenger (1990) highlights that often structures are imposed on people: “at the heart of this transfiguration of power relations is the creation of overarching normative structures that mediate and define these relations” (p. 54). In the case of a learning context, the set up of the classroom could be seen as an imposed structure on the teacher and students which has been determined by various powers such as the Ministry of Education, school board, and school administration. Finally, the work of Vygotsky is not mentioned in the main text of the dissertation. Therefore, it
is useful to reference the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) which connects Vygotsky’s (1978) work to their research by linking Engeström’s (1987) expanded definition “the zone of proximal development” which is “collectivist”:

…researchers tend to concentrate on processes of social transformation. They share our interest in extending the study of learning beyond the pedagogical structuring, to including the structure of the social world in the analysis, and taking into account in a central way the conflictual nature of social practice. We place more emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transformation with changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49)

In addition to being influenced by the above scholars, Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation framework as “an analytical viewpoint on learning” (p. 40) which is based on five research studies of apprenticeship: midwives (Jordan, 1989), tailors (Lave, n.d.), quartermasters (Hutchins, 1993), butchers (Marshall, 1972) and alcoholics (Cain, no date). In a personal email, Wenger adds these five cases were not the only source of inspiration. We also had Jean's earlier work on math, the work on cognitive apprenticeship…Plus all sorts of conversations at the Institute for Research on Learning where we were doing our work. In some sense, these ideas were in the air, and we just happened to give them a voice (E. Wenger, personal email, January 24, 2010)

A Social Learning System

In a recent essay, Wenger (2009) explores the systemic nature of a community of practice and deems it as “a social learning system”: “Arising out of learning, it exhibits many characteristics of systems more generally: emergent structure, complex relationships, self-organization, dynamic boundaries, on going negotiation of identity and cultural meaning” (p. 1). He explains that learning in community of practice is a dual process. He underlines that when people are in social contexts they both engage directly in activities such as “conversations, reflections, and other forms of personal participation in social life” (p. 1) as well as produce “physical and cultural artefacts” such as words, tools, concepts, methods, stories, documents” (p. 1) which are known as forms of “reification” or “making something into an object.” Wenger stresses that learning is only meaningful with both the engagement and the production. He further explains that whenever we participate in a social context, both engagement and reification are brought together to be renegotiated into something fresh which underscores the dynamic nature of the learning. As time passes, the interaction of the two creates a social history “which
combines individual and collective aspects” (p. 2). This history helps to establish criteria for membership which nourishes coherence within the community. Wenger names these criteria a “regime of competence.”

Wenger (1998, 2006) indicates that there are three “dimensions” for which people can recognize their membership and make their practices the source of coherence for a community: “the domain” (Wenger, 2006) or “mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998); “the community” (Wenger, 2006) or “joint enterprise” (Wenger, 1998); “the practice” (Wenger, 2006) or “shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998). It should be noted that despite the different labels, the three characteristics are the same.

The first characteristic, the domain/mutual engagement, describes: “… people…engaged in actions whose meaning they negotiate with one another” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Therefore, they share a common interest in the community of practice: “membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people” (Wenger, p. 1, 2006). In other words, they understand “what matters, what the enterprise of the community is, and how it gives rise to a perspective on the world” (Wenger, 2009, p. 2). The second characteristic, the community/joint enterprise, depicts members engaging in joint activities and discussions where the focus is on helping each other, and sharing information (Wenger, 2006). Hence, building and nourishing relationships are crucial. Finally, the third characteristic, the practice/shared repertoire, shows that “over time, the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). These resources are developed over time and “may include routines, words, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Wenger (2006) adds an additional resource: “ways of addressing recurring problems” (p. 2). Overall, Wenger (2009) stresses that each practice is unique and cannot be created by a “…design, an institution, or another practice… if structuring elements are present, practice is never simply their output or implementation: it is a response to them – based on active negotiation of meaning. It is in this sense that learning produces a social system... (p. 2). Therefore, this social aspect of learning stresses that the person is a social participant and therefore, “a meaning making entity for whom the social world is a resource for constituting an identity” (Wenger, 2009, p. 2).
In Wenger’s discussion of learning as the production of identity he explains that learning is far more than gaining skills and information. It is “becoming a certain person – a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the “regime of competence” of a community” (Wenger, 2009, p. 2). He stresses that when a newcomer enters a community, it is mostly the “regime of competence” that shapes the experiences of the newcomer until the newcomer’s experience is able to reflect the “regime of competence.” Similarly, a newcomer can also shape the “regime of competence” when the learner brings something new into the practice which is then negotiated by the community as a new part of the “regime of competence” or not (p. 2).

Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that one process that helps a newcomer feel included in a community of practice is called legitimate peripheral participation. It is a process in which students feel included in a community of practice through conditions which help them to ease into their new setting and to feel like valued members in this new environment.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the importance of learners playing “participatory roles in expert performances of all knowledge skills, including language” (Watson-Gegeo, 2004, p. 341). Therefore, this construct, legitimate peripheral participation, is relevant to this research because it seeks to understand the effect of multi-level classes on ESL secondary school students’ participatory roles and their identity formation and development in these classes.

*Legitimate Peripheral Participation*

**Figure 1: Relations of participation and non-participation.** (Wenger, 1998, p. 167)

In short, with legitimate peripheral participation, newcomers’ learning occurs through modified forms of participation that are structured to open the community of practice to them and to ease them into becoming full-participants. Peripherality and legitimacy are two types of modification required to make actual participation possible. According to Wenger (1998), peripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice through such means as lessened risk or intensity, special assistance, close supervision and lessened production pressure. With peripherality, there is some degree of non-participation initially in which observation is recognized as a useful tool to introduce newcomers into a community of practice. However, ultimately, newcomers need to be mutually engaged with other members, and their actions be provided with an environment that allows newcomers to negotiate their membership and have access to the repertoire in use in the community of practice. Briefly, in the case of peripherality, the participation aspect dominates and non-participation is seen as an “enabling factor of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 165).

In contrast, there is marginality. With marginality, non-participation dominates and restricts newcomers from fully participating in the community of practice. According to Wenger (1998), the difference between peripherality and marginality must be seen according to the trajectories that determine the significance of forms of participation:

Newcomers, for instance, may be on an inbound trajectory that is construed by everyone to include full participation in its future…Conversely, long-standing members can be kept in a marginal position, and the very maintenance of that position may have become so integrated in the practice that it closes the future… (Wenger, 1998, p. 166)

Hence, in a community of practice, the aim is to minimize marginality because it limits learning opportunities.

Next, as already mentioned, a second key component of legitimate peripheral participation is legitimacy. Legitimacy is when newcomers are treated as potential members. Providing newcomers with a sense of legitimacy is important because they will not likely immediately grasp the expectations of competent engagement in the community of practice: “Only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion” (Wenger, 1998, p. 101). Hence, through providing newcomers with the accommodations of peripherality and legitimacy, they can gain entry into a community of practice that enables them to work towards becoming full-participants where their learning opportunities are maximized.
Moreover, Wenger (1998) stresses that the ideal community of practice should have a “learning architecture” that creates opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation or entry into three “modes of belonging” in a community of practice: engagement, imagination, and alignment. In a personal email, Wenger states the question we must ask is, “to what extent do processes of [engagement], imagination and alignment provide an experience of LPP. And I think this can only be decided in each case, depending on how the periphery of a community is organized” (E. Wenger, personal email, April 26, 2006). Moreover, the inclusion of all three modes of belonging means that learning is not just focused on a curriculum, but rather on the formation and development of identity. As well, in her research, Goldstein (2003) draws on the image of an open door taken from an interview with teacher, Leslie Edgars, to stress that contexts, which provide opportunities to participate, affect students’ identity formation and development:

Leslie Edgars is a teacher who wants to open small doors for her students so that they can open the bigger doors for themselves. Doors can be understood as metaphors for insights into life and identity issues. When Ms. Edgars’ students start opening doors, they are able to shed light on the social, political, and identity issues that impact on their everyday lives. (p. 90)

Figure 2: Modes of belonging. (Wenger, 1998, p. 174)

This next section briefly defines these modes of belonging in a community of practice: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Later, there is an explanation of how including them, to allow for legitimate peripheral participation, expands the learning process to identity formation and development.

**Engagement.** First, opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation through engagement requires a three-part process where newcomers have participation in their community of practice that enables them to negotiate meaning, to move toward being full participants and to share their experiences. Wenger states engagement is “…the ability to take part in meaningful activities and interactions, in the production of sharable artefacts, community-building conversations, and in the negotiation of new situations. It implies a sustained intensity and relations of mutuality” (p. 182). According to Wenger (1998), for learning to occur, “the work of engagement” requires authentic access to both the participative and the reificative aspects of practice:

…engagement requires access to and interaction with other participants, …the ability and the legitimacy to make contributions, …to negotiate meaning, …to develop the shared practice, …[and to ability to use] reificative paraphernalia…: symbols, tools, language…A lack of access to either…results in the inability to learn. (pp. 184-185)

Hence, Wenger (1998) highlights that legitimate peripheral participation in “engaged” activities is an essential part of the learning architecture of a community of practice. However, he acknowledges that there are some limitations of engagement such as it is “bounded” because of time and place; it is restricted in the number of activities in which we can involve ourselves; it is limited in the number of people with whom we can share our experiences. Goldstein’s (2003) research provides an example of how students who are blocked from engagement in school activities do not make as much progress in second language learning:

The second student did not make nearly as much progress learning English as the first student did. Speaking up in response to these comments, Cathy, a Hong Kong-born Chinese student, told Marilyn that it was often difficult to pursue new friendships with English-speaking people. English-speaking must want to be friends with you, she told Marilyn…Given that the pursuit of interactions with English-speakers can be difficult, providing ESOL students with access to sites where such interactions are possible is important. (p. 115)

Moreover, Goldstein (2003) addresses the important role of extra-curricular activities as a key factor in fostering social interaction or engagement. Drawing on an example of an extra-
curricular playwriting workshop, Goldstein (2003) describes one of its most valued outcomes: “...for many of the students [, it] was the opportunity to ‘make new friends’ with people who had been classmates, but not friends” (p. 115). Moreover, Goldstein (2003) indicates that parents, at that particular school, remarked on the significant role that extra-curricular activities play in creating a non-competitive atmosphere which encourages social interaction.

**Imagination.** In addition, complementary to activities of engagement are opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation through imagination. Wenger (1998) defines imagination as a process that is creative in which one can produce new images or generate new relations of the world which transcend engagement:

> through imagination, we can locate ourselves in the world and in history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives. It is through imagination that we recognize our own experiences as reflecting broader patterns, connections, and configurations. Opportunities to engage in imagination enable us to see our own practices as continuing histories that reach far into the past, and it is through imagination that we conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures. (p. 178)

Overall, “the work of imagination” requires one to disconnect from the immediate situation of engagement and to look for other trajectories of peripherality that enable one to extend one’s identity to other realities. For example, Wenger suggests that it is like looking at an apple seed and seeing a tree (p. 176). In an educational context, it is taking one’s activities in a classroom and seeing this activity’s potential in another light. For instance, in a drama class, one could be a participant in an educational video for supporting newcomers and then, from this experience, one could see the possibility of expanding one’s identity from that of a participant to that of a potential leader in an Ambassadors’ Club: this club serves to orientate newcomers. In a personal email, Wenger concurs with this example:

> I would say that imagination is a way to achieve orientation by providing you with a broader scheme of things. Now an orientation process can do just that, and usually this is the idea, giving you a new image of your self and your trajectory. But orientation here is used in the broader sense of understanding where you are. (E. Wenger, personal email, July 21, 2006).

More specifically, for imagination to occur, students need opportunities for orientation, reflection and exploration. Hence, the activity of participating in the video gives students an orientation into the importance of supporting newcomers, opportunities to reflect on the importance and chances to explore a leadership role in orientation through participation in the video.
Furthermore, this example stresses that for imagination to occur, there must be an “opening of participation that allows imagination to have effects beyond itself so we may learn from it by bringing it back into a form of engagement. Otherwise, imagination is just an escape…” (p. 217). As well, in terms of reification (giving form to our experience through objects that capture or reflect this experience), imagination requires material to work with such as graphs, maps, and books which enables us to make connections beyond direct engagement (Wenger, 1998). With insufficient materials, imagination may be difficult. This reveals that its key limitation is that it can be impossible to go beyond itself without ultimately, having opportunities to participate in direct engagement. For English language learners, imagination encourages students to make their English learning personally meaningful as they imagine potential selves. Therefore, this ability to see possibilities for themselves in their new country nurtures their feelings of integration into their new culture. Moreover, by encouraging imagination, English language learners could potentially take a disengaging environment and creatively look for ways they can make their English learning beneficial to their new life and therefore, engaging.

Alignment. Wenger (1998) suggests that legitimate peripheral participation opportunities through alignment are a third key mode of belonging in a community of practice. Like imagination, alignment is not confined to mutual engagement. However, it could be argued that for alignment to fully occur, ultimately some sort of engagement is necessary. In a community of practice, being provided with legitimate peripheral participation opportunities for alignment allows us to connect ourselves to a bigger “enterprise” or “engage” with others. Therefore, through alignment, we claim our attachment to a greater cause where we may or may not engage with others in a broader involvement: “alignment amplifies the ramifications of our actions by coordinating multiple localities, competencies, and viewpoints” (p. 180). The “work of alignment” requires the ability to organize individual energy and perspectives toward a common goal. By having the chance to participate in activities that explore alignment, such as “boundary processes” or “experiences of multi-membership”, we may “redefine our enterprises and see our own participation in a broader context” (p. 218). The limitation of alignment is that one may form allegiances that are “blinding” whereby individual voice is lost and hence, individual identity formation and development may be violated. When considering English language learners, alignment plays an important role as many students hold strong ties to their family goals. In addition, they seek a social circle and a sense of purpose in their new school
which suggests alignment will their peers as well. To summarize, Wenger (1998) purports that all three modes of belonging are essential for access to legitimate peripheral participation and for the formation of a learning community. The three modes of belonging complement each other and by combining them effectively, “a community of practice can become a learning community” (p. 187). Moreover, this learning community does not just deliver curriculum, but rather, it is instrumental in supporting newcomers’ abilities to form identities in their new context. The different modes of belonging that constitute the learning community bring about change in who we are and what we are capable of doing and therefore the three modes of belonging are an “experience of identity.” Hence, the degree to which newcomers have legitimate peripheral participation in all three modes of belonging shapes their identities in their new context and hence, their ability to integrate successfully into their new culture.

**Figure 3: Social ecology of identity.** (Wenger, 1998, p. 190)

Identity. More specifically, this degree of legitimate peripheral participation impacts two key processes that lead to identity formation and development: identification and negotiability (Wenger, 1998). Identification occurs for newcomers when legitimate peripheral participation helps newcomers have experiences and materials in each mode of belonging of engagement, imagination, and alignment that encourages newcomers to invest themselves in the mode of belonging which nurtures their ability to integrate into their new culture. Negotiability means that newcomers are provided with legitimate peripheral participation that allows for them to make meaning applicable to their new circumstances whereby they can assert their membership and enlist the collaboration of others in each mode of belonging. Again, negotiability helps newcomers to integrate into their new society. It should be noted that legitimate peripheral participation is far more than just a process of learning and identity formation and development on the part of the newcomers. It is also a reciprocal relation between the newcomers and the community of practice. This means that the move of learners toward full participation in a community of practice does not take place in a static context: “The practice itself is in motion…change is a fundamental property of communities of practice…” (pp. 116-117). In his comments on power relations in second language education, Cummins (2000) raises parallel points which complement Wenger’s “identification” and “negotiability”: “Collaborative relations of power…reflect the sense of the term ‘power’ that refers to ‘being enabled’ or ‘empowered’ to achieve more…Students whose schooling experiences reflect collaborative relations of power participate confidently in instruction as a result of the fact that their sense of identity is being affirmed and extended in their interactions with educators…” (p. 44).

Norton (2001) draws on this model to better understand ESL students’ participatory roles and identity formation and development is based on her work in the 1990s where she investigated 5 adult female ESL students over a 12 month period in adult ESL classes. In her past research, Norton (1995) had called for “a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context…SLA theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities L2 learners have to practice the target language outside of the classroom” (p. 12). At this time, Norton (1995) also introduced her focus for understanding identity that is based on Weedon’s (1987) work. In particular, social identity is seen from a post-structural perspective: it is dynamic, contradictory, and diverse; it is impacted by different power positions that the participant “takes up”; it changes
over time. In Norton (2001), she focuses on 2 of 5 women from her previous work in the 1990s where she examines the relationship between their non-participation and “imagined communities” and stresses its impact on a learner’s identity formation and development. Here, Norton (2001) links Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptual construct to Wenger’s (1998) work on “modes of belonging” and “identity.” This is noteworthy because Wenger (1998) does not do this in his work; he revisits “legitimate peripheral participation” for only two pages and fails to connect it clearly with the “modes of belonging” and “identity.” Thus, Norton’s (2001) work serves as an excellent reference for this study; however, this present study will further highlight this interrelationship between the modes of belonging and identity. Norton’s (2001) research investigates adult ESL classes that are not multi-level in language ability groupings. This research study adds a different perspective by using the “legitimate peripheral participation” to examine not only a different context in terms of the ability groupings, but also a different context in terms of age: the participants are adolescents with the exception of their teacher. In addition, Norton (2001) isolates only certain aspects of Wenger’s (1998) “modes of belonging.” She focuses on “imagined communities” and only briefly touches upon the two other “modes of belonging” called “engagement” and “alignment.” In contrast, this research study includes all three “modes of belonging” as contributing factors to legitimate peripheral participation construct. Finally, Norton (2001) focuses on inequitable relations of power which limit the opportunities L2 learners to practice the target language “outside of the classroom.” In contrast, this research focuses on the inside of the classroom.

Also, over a 3 year period, Toohey (2000) followed 6 kindergarten students in their engagement in mainstream classes “as filtered through a primary concern in order to investigate how the children of minority language background inhabit particular identities in regular classrooms: “I have also tried to understand how those identities might determine or affect [or be determined by] what these children can do and say and in what kinds of conversations they are permitted to engage” (p. 16). She stresses that some students have more access to and more experience in the use of the community’s various mediating means (e.g. language) than others, and that some participants are not always equally positioned in their community. Like Norton (2001), Toohey’s (2000) work is an excellent reference point for this study. However, it differs from the present study in that it examines ESL young children in regular classes whereas this study investigates adolescent ESL students in a multi-level ESL subject specific class. As well,
Toohey (2000) does not focus on the different modes of belonging which are included in this study. Hence, this research adds to the body of literature that uses the legitimate peripheral participation framework as a focal point.

When considering the multi-level groupings’ literature, several researchers describe their belief that the multi-level classes negatively impact upon student participation. Balliro (1997a) explains how this grouping strategy limits students’ engagement in an adult ESL multi-level classroom:

When pressed, many teachers admit that they try to meet everyone’s needs in the class, all the time, even though they know it’s ultimately impossible…though the field asserts the need for learner centred pedagogy, there are simply not enough resources available to bring all students goals to fruition…We’re faced often with adult students for whom the system, in its many guises, has failed them, marginalized them, pushed them down… (pp. 6-7)

Similarly, Leu (1997) states the weaker ESL students in a mixed-level regular class “suffered from having less on-task time when they actually demanded more on-task time in order to catch up with their more proficient peers…[this] denying them the continued support they may need subsequently when they are not in specialized ESL program” (pp. 24-25). Likewise, Maddalena (2002) comments on the frustration of the highest-level student who did not feel his needs were being met: “the target language is invariably aimed below his level of competence…so he assumes that his skills and abilities are rarely challenged” (p. 7). Similarly, Valentic (2005), and Pham Phu (2007) indicate students’ participation is negatively impacted by the multi-level nature of the classroom. Yet, Hoffer and Larson (1997) list several benefits in the multi-level classroom which enhance student participation. Although all of these researchers comment on the relationship between the multi-level classes and student participation, they provide no concrete evidence to back up their claims. Through using the legitimate peripheral participation framework as a lens to examine the ESL multi-level classroom, this study provides data to understand this relationship.

**Conceptual Framework 2: L2 Motivation**

This third section focuses on the second conceptual framework for this study: the Actional Phase of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation. However, before focusing on the model, there is a review of two past periods of L2 motivation research: the social psychological period and the cognitive-situated period. In this review, attention is drawn
to the fact that as the research progresses, researchers highlight the importance of social context in L2 motivation. After this description, the thesis shifts to more current research, the process-oriented period, with Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation. Finally, one element of the Actional Phase, self-regulatory strategies, is isolated. This is viewed by Dörnyei (2005) as a significant area for future motivational research; Dörnyei (2005) states that the work of Wenger (1998) and Norton (2001), which is based on Wenger (1998), can be linked to this component. Therefore, this link shows that this research on ESL multi-level ability classes has the potential to connect the framework of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) L2 Process model of motivation to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation construct. Moreover, in Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2009) anthology on L2 motivation studies, several researchers continue to draw on portions of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) framework or Wenger’s (1998) work in relation to their motivation research. This underscores the value in fully examining how the entire community of practice framework can relate to motivation research or in this case, Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation.

Social Psychological Period

From the 1960s to 1990, L2 motivation research is characterized by the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972). In fact, it is commonly cited as the most influential work in L2 motivational research (Dörnyei, 2005). In this research, the focal point was to understand the “unique Canadian coexistence of the Anglophone and francophone communities…” (Dörnyei, 2003, p.4). The researchers examined how language can be a “mediating factor” between different ethnolinguistic communities and from that, they viewed motivation to learn the other cultural communities’ language as an inhibitor or enhancer of intercultural communication. More specifically, the researchers considered attitudes toward the second language and the second language community as key factors in determining students’ motivation. The researchers examined these attitudinal factors with regard to two orientations: instrumental and integrative. Dörnyei (2001a) describes the “integrative motive” (Gardner, 1985) as being the most elaborate and widely researched aspect of the theory: this orientation is composed of three components: “integrativeness”, “motivation”, and “attitudes toward the learning situation”.

Despite the fact that the “integrative motive” has been highly developed and researched, “…the notion has remained an enigma…and its exact nature is difficult to define…” (Gardner, 2001, p. 1). For instance, the model is confusing because the term “integrative” appears three
times and “motivation” appears twice. More recently, Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) propose that “integrativeness” component should be reconceptualized and reinterpreted beyond the original definition of actual integration into an L2 community and extended to “identification” with the L2 community. Regardless of these criticisms, the model has served L2 motivation research throughout the 1990s in two key ways: “all the main subsequent models drew on the social psychological construct extensively, and Gardner’s model also persevered because of the [Attitude/Motivation Test Battery]…” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 71). This multi-component motivation questionnaire has been widely used in many L2 motivation studies.

Still, it must be noted that since this is a structured questionnaire, it is also limited in that it fails to capture “thick” data (Geertz, 1973). It is for this reason that in my Master’s thesis (Gordon, 1997), I looked more deeply at Gardner’s (1985) “integrative motive” whereby I focused on examining “attitudes toward the learning situation” through interviews, observations and journals in a 6-month case study with adult immigrants in an English tutorial program. Now, looking back on this research, I wonder whether it was somewhat groundbreaking because it was challenging the positivist norm of data collection on this subject. This desire to take this approach mirrors Spolsky’s (2000) commentary on the need “for a richer methodology” (p. 163) in L2 motivation research. Spolsky (2000) recalls a conversation that he had with Lambert who criticized the questionnaire as a means of gathering data on opinions and attitudes: “He thought it reasonable, but went on to say that the best way to learn about someone’s integrative motivation was probably to sit quietly and chat with him over a bottle of wine for an evening” (p. 160).

Cognitive-Situated Period

Many cognitive motivational theories in educational psychology emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that were imported into L2 motivational research in the 1990s. According to Dörnyei (2005), this trend was adopted for two reasons:

1) The desire to catch up with advances in motivational psychology…motivational psychologists representing a cognitive perspective argued convincingly that how one thinks about one’s abilities, possibilities, potentials, limitations, and past performance, as well as various aspects of the tasks to achieve or goals to attain…is a crucial aspect of motivation.

2) The desire to narrow down the macroperspective of L2 motivation which focused on whole communities taken by social psychologists such as Gardner and Lambert to a more fine-tuned and situated analysis of motivation as it operates in actual learning situations characterized by a microperspective. (p. 74)
This new focus on the microperspective is best known for having been influenced by various cognitive approaches from motivational psychology such as expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory and the situated approach (Dörnyei, 2005).

**Expectancy-Value Theory.** The expectancy-value theory that is most recognized for impacting L2 motivation research is the attribution theory (Weiner, 1992). Essentially, the theory links our past experiences to our future achievement by “introducing causal attributions as the mediating link” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 79). Weiner (1992) proposes that one’s motivation for future action is largely influenced by the reasons that we attribute to our past successes or failures. Ushioda is one of the key researchers in L2 motivation who has drawn on this theory. In a small-scale study of university-level French students in Ireland, Ushioda (2001) found four attributional patterns that affect motivational thinking. An example of one of these patterns is “enhancing one’s self-concept by attributing positive L2 outcomes and achievement to a belief in personal ability or personal qualities (e.g., hard work, effort, a perfectionist approach)” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 120). Ushioda’s work clearly shows patterns of thinking which illustrate ways in which learners can take control of their affective learning experience. This work highlights that “the study of attributions is an important line of investigation in [L2 motivation research]” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 80). In addition, it should be noted that throughout her research over the last decade, she has been insistent on incorporating a more qualitative approach to L2 motivation research as she highlights the importance of the relationship between the social context and the L2 motivation of the language learner: “…especially where motivation is concerned, qualitative research methods yield more interesting insights into the complexity of the interface between cognitive and socio-affective factors that traditional quantitative approaches” (Ridley & Ushioda, 1997, p. 30).

**Self-Determination Theory.** Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) proposes that intrinsic and extrinsic motives play a key role in our motivation. More specifically, self-determination theory is concerned with the development and functioning of personality within social contexts. The theory focuses on the degree to which human behaviours are volitional or self-determined. In other words, to what degree do people endorse their actions at the highest level of reflection and engage in the actions with a full sense of choice (Wikimedia Foundation, 2006b)?
This theory has been linked to L2 motivation through such work as Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand (2000). More specifically, their work helped them to better define the instrumental and integrative orientations of Gardner and Lambert (1972) by showing that “Gardner’s integrative orientation was most strongly associated with the more self-determined forms of motivation… [while] instrumental orientation… correlated highly with external regulation” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 77). As well, they created a valid and reliable measuring instrument for assessing the various components of self-determination theory in L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2003a). Finally, their research sheds light on environmental factors impacting learner self-determination: “the more students perceived their teachers as controlling… the less they were intrinsically motivated” (Dörnyei, 2005). This finding highlights the importance of how social context can play a key role in impacting students’ L2 motivation.

**Situated Approach.** In an attempt to better understand the classroom environment, L2 motivation researchers therefore began to examine the impact of various aspects of the classroom context such as “course-specific”, “teacher-specific” and “group-specific” motivational components. It is here that we begin to see a real shift from the cognitive approach, where researchers focused on motivation as an individual phenomenon, to a more holistic approach that incorporates the role of the dynamic L2 social context on motivation. In order to provide an example, one research direction that has taken this situated approach looks at L2 learners’ willingness to communicate.

This research direction is “group-specific” whereby it looks at learners’ willingness to engage in L2 communication. Studies done by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002) and MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) reveal that level of communicative competence does not necessarily relate to an individual’s willingness to engage in L2 communication. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) stresses other factors such as the impact of experts on novices in a community of practice to the Layer VI “Social and Individual Context”, variable 11: “intergroup climate” of the Willingness to Communicate Model (1998). In both cases, the interplay between the individual and the group is key to creating a context that nourishes participation in a community of practice or L2 motivation among students.

Figure 4: Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 86)

Since the late 1990s, L2 motivation research has truly shifted from placing the main emphasis on individual attitudinal factors toward the second language and the second language community to taking a more sociocultural approach whereby the dynamic relationship between students and second language teachers and courses comes to the forefront:

Consequently, contemporary accounts of motivation and other related psychological contracts (such as identity, self-esteem, or self-efficacy) have increasingly abandoned the tacit assumption of environmental generalisability and included contextual factors as independent variables into the research paradigms… (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 30)

Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) L2 Process Model of Motivation is representative of this shift whereby in their model, they draw on previous research and include social context as a factor which impacts L2 motivation. In addition, Dörnyei’s and Ottó’s (1998) research adds a temporal dimension to the process model of motivation: the model explains changes in motivation over time (Dörnyei, 2001b). More specifically, in a personal email to me, Dörnyei describes his approach:

my starting point was the social psychological approach to motivation research, which takes an individual-based view of social processes (by means of measuring attitudes). I have then extended this paradigm through adding a number of social components (e.g. group-effects) as well as a number of individualistic components drawing on educational psychology. Thus, at the moment I believe in a completely eclectic construct. (Z. Dörnyei, personal email, August 7, 2003)

The L2 Process Model consists of three stages: “Pre-actional Phase, Actional Phase, and Post-actional Phase” (Dörnyei, 2005). Within each stage, there are two main dimensions: “Motivational Functions” and “Main Motivational Influences.” In particular, the Pre-actional Phase and the Actional Phase reflect the interconnectedness of the evolution of the three periods in L2 motivation history. As well, the Actional Phase highlights the importance of the sociocultural component in L2 motivation.

**Pre-actional Phase.** This stage focuses on “choice motivation” where learners set goals and form intentions of whether to study a second language course. One can see the link of this stage to the social psychological period by reviewing Gardner’s (1985) integrative motive. Dörnyei and Skehan (2005) define this link in their synthesis of L2 motivation research:

How does such a process-oriented construct relate to Gardner’s (1985) established social psychological conception of L2 motivation? The Canadian approach has traditionally targeted the more general and stable aspects of motivation, such as language attitudes, beliefs, and values. From a process-oriented perspective, these motivational aspects are
primarily associated with the Pre-actional Stage of motivation and are, therefore, particularly useful in predicting issues such as language choice or the initial intention to enrol in a language course. (p. 618)

Moreover, in this stage, there is in fact an identical main motivational influence to two of the components in Gardner’s (1985) “integrative motive”: “Attitudes toward the L2; Attitudes toward its speakers.”

**Actional Phase.** Another obvious connection to the cognitive-situated period can be seen in Dörnyei and Otto’s model by focusing on the Actional Phase. In this stage, Dörnyei (2001b) states there are main motivational influences that impact a complex ongoing appraisal process of one’s learning environment or achievement. This appraisal process works together with “subtask generation and implementation” and “an application of a variety of action control mechanisms” in order to enhance, scaffold or protect students’ learning or the “Actional Outcome.” Simply stated, it is at this stage, in the appraisal process, that students maintain and protect their motivation of their L2 learning:

This motivation is particularly relevant to learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number of distracting influences, such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant distractions from others, anxiety about the tasks, or physical conditions that make it difficult to complete the task. (Dörnyei, 2001a, p.21)

In particular, Dörnyei (2001a) states that this is where there is “Executive Motivation” with the six Main Motivational Influences that affect students’ judgement of the learning environment or their appraisal of the learning experience: “quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image)”, “sense of autonomy”, “teachers’ and parents’ influence”, “classroom reward and goal structure (e.g. competitive or cooperative)”, “influence of the learner group”, and “knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g. goal setting, learning and self-motivating strategies).”

Dörnyei (2001b) deems “Quality of the Learning Experience” as the most important of the six Main Motivational Influences. He bases this part of the model on the neurobiological work of Schumann (1998): “stimulus appraisal.” Schumann’s neurobiological theory postulates five dimensions along which stimulus appraisals are made: novelty, pleasantness, goal/need significance, coping potential, and self and social image (Dörnyei, 2001b).

According to Dörnyei (2001b), another motivational influence, “Sense of Autonomy,” has numerous bases: Deci and Ryan’s (1985) theory on intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and self-
determination, the research of Brown (1994) who emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in the L2 classroom, the attribution theory of Weiner (1992), recent investigations of learner autonomy and L2 motivation by researchers such as Ushioda (1996, 1998, 2001), and some work done by Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000) who developed an instrument for assessing L2 learners’ perspectives on how supportive a classroom or the teacher is of autonomous learning.

A third motivational influence, “Teachers’ and Parents’ Influence,” is derived from sociocultural research. For instance, the reviews of Juvonen and Wentzel (1996), Wentzel, (1999), Wigfield, Eccles and Rodriguez (1998) claim student motivation lends itself to analysis from multiple perspectives with a strong social emphasis. Likewise, the study of McInerney, Roche, McInerney, and Marsh (1997), which is the largest-scale research project on the sociocultural component of student motivation, also leads Dörnyei to highlight the importance of the teachers’ and parents’ influence on student motivation. For the purposes of this research on multi-level groupings, it is more appropriate to discuss the impact the teachers’ influence on student motivation more than the parents’, because the teacher is an integral part of the L2 environment where students are arranged in the multi-level groupings. Dörnyei (2001b) states that there are four interrelated dimensions of the way teachers influence student motivation: “the teacher’s immediacy with students,” “the teacher’s ability to produce active motivational socialising behaviour,” “the teacher’s capability to provide classroom management,” and “the personal characteristics of the teacher.”

“Classroom Reward and Goal Structure” and “Influence of the Learner Group” are two other motivational influences of Dörnyei and Ottó’s model that are also directly tied to the research of McInerney, Roche, McInerney, and Marsh (1997) on social motivation and the learning environment. These researchers found that two of the emerging social factors in determining student motivation are competition among peers and affiliation with peers. They showed that when competition with peers is low and affiliation or cooperation among peers is high, students’ appraisal of the learning environment is positive and hence, L2 motivation increases. Dörnyei’s motivational influences of Classroom Reward and Goal Structure and the Influence of the Learner Group in the L2 process model are based on this finding. Classroom Reward and Goal Structure refers to whether the learning environment is competitively, cooperatively or individually structured. Influence of the Learner Group is defined as the impact
that the social group has on the overall experience of the students’ learning. It should be noted that these motivational influences are related to each other. When the group is a social unit where competition is low and interpersonal relations are high, the productivity and motivation of the students is increased. This shows how the classroom reward and goal structure can impact the entire group motivation. Moreover, both of these motivational influences are also related to the previous motivational influence: “Teachers’ Influence.” “In their position as group leaders, teachers are also largely responsible for the development of group characteristics in the class, which in turn affect student motivation” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 79). To improve Dörnyei’s L2 motivation process model, he might consider showing the relationship among these Main Motivational Influences. In addition, this influence appears to be tied to the studies on the Willingness to Communicate Model (1998) conducted by MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002) and MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998).

The sixth motivational influence, “Knowledge and Use of Self-Regulatory Strategies,” comprises of learning strategies, goal-setting strategies, and motivation maintenance strategies that are an important source for scaffolding and enhancing motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b p. 99). According to Dörnyei and Skeehan (2005), Ushioda (1994, 2001) is a key researcher who has identified some of the self-motivating strategies learners can use when facing adverse learning conditions.

**Post-actional Phase.** In the final stage of the process model, the Post-actional Phase, the learners have completed the actions and they evaluate how well things went: “motivational retrospection.” Dörnyei (2005) states that “the way students process their past experiences in this retrospective phase will determine the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue in the future” (p. 84). In addition, Dörnyei (2001b) briefly mentions that student identity can be shaped at this stage:

During this [post-actional] phase, the learner compares initial expectancies and plans of action to how they turned out in reality and forms causal attributions about the extent to which the intended goals has been reached. This critical retrospection contributes significantly to accumulated experience, and allows for the learner to elaborate his or her internal standards and the repertoire of action-specific strategies. It is through such evaluation that an individual can develop a stable identity as a successful learner (Boekaerts, 1988) (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 91).

Overall, this research adds to the understanding of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation and the body of literature that is incorporated into this model. More
specifically, the Main Motivational Influences in the Actional Phase or other phases of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation become more defined and their interrelationships more clearly shown. In fact, recently, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) have called for a rethinking of this model to better understand the “process-oriented nature of motivation or the dynamic interaction between motivation and the social environment…[where] there are no clear-cut and predictable cause-effect relations because the emphasis is on the complexity and idiosyncrasy of a person’s motivational response to particular events and experiences in their life” (pp. 354-355). They suggest that one new possible research approach is “dynamic systems theory” which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

In the multi-level groupings’ literature, Bruzzese and Dedmon (1997), Maddalena (2002), Pham Phu (2007), Valentic (2005), and Yoshida (1998) underscore student motivation is affected in ESL multi-level classrooms. For example, in response to the students’ opinion survey which listed multi-level groupings as undesirable, Yoshida (1998) states the university should take note of students’ voices: “If a student feels that there is a problem with something, he or she may lose motivation for studying and damage the university atmosphere for other students” (p. 4). Similarly, Maddalena (2002) comments “…it would seem that classroom harmony might be better achieved in groups of motivated students who seek successful integration based on a willingness to participate…” (p. 8). Valentic (2005) lists low student motivation as a “problem” which occurs in multi-level classes and which makes teaching them difficult. Finally, Pham Phu (2007) comments that often teachers find multi-level classroom undesirable due to students’ lack of motivation. However, these researchers only comment on motivation in relation to the multi-level classrooms; they fail to provide any data to support their claims. Therefore, this research, which uses the lens of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation with a focus on the Actional Stage, could serve to provide more concrete insight into how ESL multi-level classrooms affect students’ motivation.

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

In order to connect the two conceptual frameworks, it is useful to consider the roles of self-regulation, imagination, and identity from the conceptual frameworks.

Self-regulation. It should be noted that the last motivational influence described in the Actional Phase, self-regulatory strategies, is recognized by Dörnyei and Skehan (2005) as a new direction for L2 motivational research: “this is an intriguing new area within motivational
psychology, exploring ways by which learners can be endowed with appropriate knowledge and skills to motivate themselves” (p. 621). As mentioned, it is a motivational influence that involves learners developing self-help strategies to aid them in creating positive motivational patterns despite emotional or physical challenges.

Similarly, Ushioda (2001) views motivation in the following light: “Motivation is thus viewed not as cause or product of particular learning experiences, but as process, - in effect, the ongoing process of how the learner thinks about and interprets events in relevant L2 learning and L2 related experience and how such cognitions and beliefs then shape subsequent involvement in learning” (p.122). Likewise, in her discussion on motivation as a socially mediated process, Ushioda (2003) states “…the social unit of the classroom is clearly instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual…yet it is clear that whatever influences may be present in the social environment, these are not sufficient in themselves to promote individual motivation…” (p. 98). Furthermore, she emphasizes that “only under conditions which provide autonomy, allow room for negotiation and make the learning process challenging and personally meaningful, can learners be brought to endorse educational principles and values, to view their motivation as emanating from themselves, and to view themselves as agents in its regulation” (p. 99).

Likewise, in addressing the issue of pluralism in Europe, Ushioda (2006) again draws attention to the notion that the quality of enabled participation in a community of practice “…will depend very much on local attitudes and power structures” (p. 152) as well as learners’ abilities to self-regulate. Ushioda (2006) highlights the role of autonomy, the rights of learners within educational systems, as being important to “… the motivation concepts of identity and access because it casts the spotlight, and thereby responsibility, not just on the individual L2 learner/user but on society at large” (p. 156).

Also, in his discussion on new conceptual issues in L2 motivation, Dörnyei (2005) raises once more the point that he sees Ushioda’s work on group dynamics and self-regulation as having a “considerable bearing on future research” (p. 88). In this discussion, Dörnyei (2005) reinforces his commitment to the importance of the social context when he discusses the importance of revisiting the “integrative motive” (Gardner, 1985). As already mentioned, this orientation is composed of three components: “integrativeness”, “motivation”, and “attitudes toward the learning situation”. In essence, Dörnyei (2005) describes it as
a positive interpersonal affective disposition toward the L2 community and the desire for affiliation with its members. It implies an openness to and a respect for, the other cultural group and its way of life; in the extreme, it might involve complete identification with the community… (p. 97)

**Imagination.** Moreover, based on research done a large-scale longitudinal study which examined Hungarian students’ attitudes to learning foreign languages (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), Dörnyei (2005) proposes that the integrative motive be extended to some “sort of a virtual or metaphorical identification” (p. 97). Here, as key part of his discussion, Dörnyei (2005) draws on the work of Norton (2001) who bases her work on Wenger’s (1998) notion of ‘imagination’ as a mode of belonging to a community: “Norton conceptualizes the concept of ‘communities of imagination’ as being constructed by a combination of personal experiences and factual knowledge with imagined elements related to the future…a learner’s imagined community invites an ‘imagined identity’” (p. 98). Hence, Dörnyei’s (2005) commentary links Wenger’s (1998) work where we can see the connection between both L2 motivation and community of practice research. In fact, Ushioda (1997) also hints at the link between motivation and engagement which could be tied to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) model:

Self-motivation is a question of thinking effectively and meaningfully about learning experience and learning goals. It is a question of applying positive thought patterns and belief structures so to optimise and sustain one’s involvement in learning…this capacity entails taking personal control of the affective conditions and experiences that shape one’s subjective involvement in learning. It entails minimising the damage when these experiences are negative, and maximising the subjective rewards when these experiences are positive, and so fostering optimum motivational conditions for continued [engagement] in language learning (Ushioda, 1997, p. 41). (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 132)

**Identity.** Also, in Ushioda’s (2006) discussion of self-regulation, she links Norton’s (2001) work on the motivational concept of “investment” to self-regulation and ultimately, to a person’s identity: a person’s desire to invest in a L2 as being directly linked to “… their conception of themselves (or identity)…” (p. 153). She stresses that a person’s identity “…is not unified and coherent, but is multiple, complex and a site of struggle. It is in a constant state of flux, being locally constructed, negotiated, and re-formed each time through a person’s participation in community of practices” (p. 153). In short, Ushioda (2006) proposes that individual motivation and identity are “dynamically co-constructed (or constrained) through interaction” (p. 154). However, Ushioda (2006) also cautions that a learner’s “…deep-rooted
desire to learn and use another language, find a voice… [or] …identity for oneself, access and [participation] in new social or professional communities of practice, will always be subject to local negotiation and conditions” (p. 157). In other words, social relations can construct or constrain L2 motivation. She underscores that “… spotlight must be directed at the barriers and constraints within the specific sociocultural context in which the L2 learner/user is situated” (p. 156). Therefore, she stresses that L2 learners need to develop “critical awareness” of the “cultural constructions” and “social positioning” in the discourses to which they are exposed, to find “cultural alternatives” and to develop their “own voice and counterdiscourses” (p. 156). In addition, Norton (1995) examines motivation with this critical eye:

…conception of motivation, which are dominant in the field of SLA, do not capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning that I have been investigating in my study…I have drawn on my data to argue that motivation [or investment] is not a fixed personality trait but must be understood with reference to social relations of power that create the possibilities for language learners to speak” (pp. 17-26).

Moreover, in relation to this, Norton (1995) calls for “classroom-based social research” which provides insight into how teachers need to help language learners to take control of their language learning whereby they “claim the right to speak” through becoming ethnographers in their language learning through observation, reflection, and discussion.

**Self, Imagination, and Identity.** More recently, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) edited a book which shows how “…L2 motivation is currently being radically reconceptualised and retheorised in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity” (p. 1). Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2009) anthology brings together both quantitative and qualitative research with a common focus on self, imagination, imagery, and identity. More specifically, Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System and Ushioda’s “person-in-context relational view” of motivation are seen to “lie at the heart of much of the research reported in this book as well as our own thinking…” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 350).

It is clear that both Dörnyei and Ushioda’s “thinking” can be linked to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) research on community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. In fact, both reference their work in the anthology. In his chapter on the L2 Self Motivational System, Dörnyei (2009) cites Wenger (1998) as he discusses the “prominent place of imagery in possible selves’ theory” (p. 16). Likewise, Ushioda (2009) lists community of
practice and situated learning as being theoretical frameworks “… which may usefully inform a more contextually embedded relational view of motivation and identity” (p. 220). This link is understandable when considering her “person-in-context relational view” of motivation:

- a focus on the agency of the individual person…with an identity… a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective agent and the fluidity and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences, and multiple micro- and macro- contexts in which the person is embedded…” (p. 220)

Hence, she too clearly sees the value in using Lave and Wenger (1991) community of practice framework to better understand student motivation.

Similarly, there are a few key studies which draw on Lave and Wenger (1998) in Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2009) anthology. For instance, conducting research in a Japanese high school, Yashima (2009) explores the concept of ideal self as it relates to “… to [finding] an answer to the challenge we face in EFL contexts… of motivating learners to study English…” (p. 144) More specifically, she describes how English language learners could relate to visions of themselves in an imagined international community as a driving force for their motivation to learn English which she clearly describes as being based on Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998); however, her analysis focuses only on imagination and does not reflect other features of the conceptual framework or on the interrelations among the features such as how engagement, imagination and alignment impact each other and identity.

On a similar note, Lamb (2009) describes his case study research in Sumatra with two youth as being influenced by the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) because these researchers “… attempt to explain how individual agency and social structure are mutually shaped and constrained” (p. 230). In the article, Lamb focuses on two youth who “… exemplify two different stances towards English language” (p. 233). Here, Lamb (2009) describes how their possible selves, with one being “ideal” and the other “ought-to”, impact their L2 motivation. He discusses the role of imagination in the construction of the “ideal self” and links it to self-regulation: “Dewi’s ‘ideal L2 self’ helped her to regulate her learning of English, pushing her to find alternative means when others broke down” (p. 239). Lamb (2009) contrasts this decision to the other participant: “With only an ‘ought-to’ self guide, Munandar may be less likely to put himself in situations where lack of competence is exposed” (p. 239). Here, Lamb (2009) suggests that the participant would be less likely to self-regulate. Hence, the first participant is more aligned with her imagined community of practice and wishes to identify
herself as a member. Although Lamb (2009) mentions alignment, he does not explore the interrelationship between imagination and alignment and their role on impacting identity.

Therefore, although Lamb’s research touches upon the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), there is no holistic view of the community of practice framework with a focus on legitimate peripheral participation with regard to motivation, but rather only aspects of the framework are mentioned. This study *fully* examines the multi-level ESL language ability classroom through both of these conceptual lenses and provides insight on how a link can be made between these two research paradigms. This research looks at the dynamic interplay of imagination and alignment and their impact on student identity as they relate to the notion of legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and its link to self-regulation and self-concept beliefs in the Actional and Post-actional Phases of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) L2 Process model of motivation.
Chapter 3 – Methodology

Orientation

A primarily qualitative/interpretive approach is best suited for exploring how multi-level ability groupings classes affect ESL secondary students in terms of their participation, identity formation and development, and motivation because this approach enables the researcher to understand the research question from the participants’ perspective. As already mentioned in the discussion of the two conceptual frameworks, this study looks at students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation as being constructed in the community of practice in which it is situated:

from this perspective, educational research should focus not so much on trying to find out what individuals are doing [in their head]…but rather on the variety of positioning available for learners to occupy in their communities, social relations in particular communities, and the design and structure of the practices which bound the community. Conditions in different communities vary with regard to ease of access to expertise, to opportunities for practice…All of these matters are important in analyzing how particular communities organise learning. (Toohey, 2000, p. 126)

In fact, this interpretive approach has been also called for by other researchers who draw on Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) work such as Norton (2001): “I hope that further [ethnographic] research will shed light on the intriguing relationship between learners’ non-participation and their imagined communities” (p. 171).

Likewise, in L2 motivation research, Dörnyei (2001b), Rueda and Moll (1994), Spolsky (2000), and Ushioda (1994, 2001, 2009) insist on this interpretive approach. Dörnyei (2001b) comments that, “…during the past decade [there] has been an increasing emphasis placed on the study of motivation that stems from the sociocultural context…” (p. 30). Similarly, Ushioda (2001) powerfully makes this point: “There is clearly scope for a more qualitative approach to the study of language learning motivation, to complement this long-standing quantitative tradition of research…” (p. 95) She reiterates that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore the dynamic nature of motivation. Again, in her recent work, Ushioda (2009) asks, “…how helpful are such linear cause-effect models when it comes to understanding how a particular student might think and feel about language learning? (p. 219). Ushioda (2009) calls for a “person-in-context relational view” of motivation:

I mean a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feelings human being, with an
identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives, and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves and is inherently a part of. My argument is that we need to take a relational (rather than linear) view of these multiple contextual elements, and view motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations. (p. 220)

In a similar vein, Dörnyei (2009) links Ushioda’s “person-in-context relational view” or interpretive approach to a new theoretical paradigm which is promising for better understanding motivation in second language acquisition. This approach bridges the positive-interpretive approaches and is known as dynamic systems theory or complex systems perspective. Hence, the interpretive approach is in line with this direction of future motivation research.

However, to situate this research and to capture a broader picture of how multi-level ability groupings classes affect the larger population group of ESL secondary students’ experiences in terms of their participation, identity formation and development, and motivation, a quantitative approach to collect data was also employed. In the conclusion of her chapter on research with ESL secondary students, Duff (2005) calls for data collection methods that can examine the larger context:

Rather than view secondary ESL students and their learning in isolation, they must be viewed in the context of their prior and subsequent learning, both inside and outside of English-medium schooling in order to understand more fully the effectiveness of their education and possibilities for the future. (p. 60)

Also, Dörnyei (2001b) discusses the high degree of usefulness of this positivist approach in L2 motivation research: Dörnyei (2001b) stresses that this approach has many advantages in that it is precise, produces reliable and replicable data, and “statistically significant results are generalisable thus, revealing broader tendencies” (p. 193).

Furthermore, Dörnyei (2001b) comments on the merits of mixed methodologies for L2 motivation research:

…during the past decade there has been a growing recognition at conferences and other professional meetings of the fact that a combination of qualitative and quantitative designs might bring out the best of both approaches while neutralizing the shortcomings and biases inherent in each paradigm. (p. 242)

Also, Dörnyei (2003b) draws on the work of McCracken (1988) to summarize why interpretive researchers might consider including a positivist method in their research:
‘How widely what is discovered exists in the rest of the world cannot be decided by qualitative methods, but only quantitative ones. It is, precisely, this ‘division of labour’ that makes the cooperative use of the qualitative and quantitative methods so important to the qualitative investigator. It is only after the qualitative investigator has taken advantage of quantitative research that he or she is prepared to determine the distribution and frequency of the cultural phenomenon that has come to light (p. 17).’ (p. 242)

Finally, Dörnyei (2007) highlights his “own paradigmatic stance” (p. 47). He reiterates his preference for a mixed methodology: “I do accept that certain issues are best researched using either QUAL or QUAN methods but I have also come to believe that in most cases a mixed methods approach can offer additional benefits for the understanding of the phenomenon in question…” (p. 47). Therefore, in order to explore how multi-level ability groupings classes affect ESL secondary students in terms of their participation, identity formation and development, and motivation, this research employs a mixed-method research program using a qualitative case study and quantitative questionnaires.

Case Study

As already mentioned, the majority of this research used a case study that is primarily a form of qualitative/interpretive research (Yang, 2005a). Within this paradigm, a case study methodology was selected in order to capture in-depth information about the participants. Briefly, by collecting data from the participants through many sources such as interviews, observations and journals over an extended period of time of 3 months, it was hoped that rich data would be collected through using the case study methodology.

Faltis’s (1998) comments reveal how case study methodology is appropriate for understanding the multi-level groupings ESL secondary school class:

researchers are also starting to use case study methods to understand and refine theory about…how students become members of the community of practice that uses academic language to make sense of knowledge systems…a related and critical issue for the future is understanding the needs of adolescent immigrant students who show up in secondary school with little or no academic and literacy experiences. (p. 151)

On a similar note, Duff (2008) describes how case study research can be linked to the community of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) by enabling researchers to consider how learning is socially constructed:

… an individual’s knowledge system and performance within a classroom context or within a particular activity setting provides sufficient background information to interpret influences on L2 comprehension, production, or task accomplishment… [However.]
…the analysis is enhanced by looking at the home, school, community or workplace environment and by looking at the individual within a social network of family members, peers, teachers, and others. The socially situated and constructed nature of cognition and performance is emphasized (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991)” (p. 38).

Creswell (2002) and Merriam (1998) define a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection; “bounded” means the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries; the bounded system could be an activity, event, process, or individuals. Yin (1989) states that boundaries between the phenomenon and the context may be blurred. In response, Van Lier (2005) comments: “We can see in this argument some kind of struggle about defining what a case really is” (p. 196). Yin (2003) says case studies are preferable when “how” and “why” questions are asked, when the researcher has little control over events, and “when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). In this research, the case is bounded in that it is a multi-level subject classroom which contains students who are from diverse backgrounds and who are at a variety of levels in their English language learning: ESL A-ESL E. These multi-level subject classrooms have been instances of concern in the school programming for both students and teachers.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993) claim “validity…may be its major strength” (p. 391). Similarly, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) cite Adelman, Kemmis, and Jenkins (1980) who declare “case study data…is ‘strong in reality’…because case studies are down-to-earth and attention-holding, in harmony with the reader’s own experience…” (p. 184). Some features of case study design that contribute to its high validity are multiple sources of data and a lengthy data collection period.

Since case studies have several sources of data, researchers can cross-validate their findings to see recurrent patterns. Yin (2003) highlights this point: “…the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence…” (p. 8). This process, “triangulation,” helps researchers to better represent the reality of the case study during data analysis. In their discussion on directions for future research, Hansen and Liu (1997) state that the dynamic nature of social identity should be explored through longitudinal studies in which “we should also try to triangulate our data collection methods in order to understand different phases and multiple layers of social identity” (p. 574). Similarly, Spolsky (2000) criticizes the
limited nature of L2 motivation questionnaires, and advocates that L2 motivation research include a variety of methods such as,

long interviews that give us an opportunity to explore in conversation and through stories and anecdotes the attitudes, identities, and ideologies of our subjects and reports of language use in various domains and with various members of their social networks. This approach guarantees the multi-methodological data, the triangulation as it were, that builds our confidence in the results. (p. 162)

Lamb (2009) calls for case studies in motivation research using a community of practice framework in order to “… attempt to explain how individual agency and social structure are mutually shaped and constrained” (p. 230). Likewise, Dörnyei (2001b) clearly states “it may also be time for L2 motivation researchers to start considering the potentials of qualitative methods-personally, I would be pleased to see more interviews and case studies” (p. 194).

Indeed, this research incorporates a variety of methods to better understand the multi-level ESL classroom and its possible impact on student participation, identity formation and development, and motivation: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and student journals. These methods tend to provide a thick description of the data (Geertz, 1973).

Also, a lengthy data collection period “[allows for] continual data analysis, comparison, and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between research based categories and participant reality” (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993, p. 391). In terms of L2 acquisition, Van Lier (2005) cites this as an advantage because a lengthy data collection allows for there to be attention to context and change over time such as what occurs in language development. Similarly, Norton (2001) comments on her community of practice case study as having “… data [gathered] in multiple sites over significant periods of time…” (p. 313). Likewise, Ushioda (2001) reports on a small-scale L2 motivation qualitative study with the purpose of analyzing students’ “thinking in relation to aspects of motivational evolution and experience over time” (p. 98): it consists of two stages of investigation over a 2 year period. In this research study, data collection is over a semester in a multi-level ESL subject class using “maximum variation sampling”: 6 students from diverse backgrounds with different language ability levels and 1 teacher.

Sample

According to Patton (1990), “maximum variation sampling” is defined as a sampling strategy which
The participants in this case study were selected from a Toronto secondary school with a population of approximately 1100 students with a predominantly Russian, Israeli, Korean and Chinese student body and a multi-racial staff. Merriam (1998) states that it is important to have “sample selection [occurring] first at the case level, followed by sample selection within the case. Therefore, after receiving the permission of the School Board and the Principal of the school (see Appendix A), in order to obtain a total of 5 student participants (both male and female) plus 2 students for attrition purposes and 1 teacher participant, volunteers from several different cases were requested. It should be noted that a third party assisted in the research (see Appendix B) by performing several tasks including attending the recruitment meetings for both the case study and questionnaire. As well, she collected all participant volunteer information so that I was unaware of who volunteered and who did not. This was to ensure confidentiality (see Appendix C). In order to obtain a staff volunteer for the research, the researcher called a meeting of all ESL teachers who have taught multi-level language ability subject classes (see Appendix D). Some examples of these classes are civics/careers, computer and information science, drama, French, geography, history, introduction to anthropology, psychology and sociology, learning strategies, mathematics, and science. At this meeting, the researcher explained the study and requested volunteers. The staff members received a letter that outlines the research and signed a consent form in order to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix E). Then, a teacher volunteer was selected based on the suitability of the multi-level classroom by the third party: students from a variety of backgrounds and a variety of levels ranging from ESL A to ESL E. The volunteers who were not chosen by the third party received a letter of appreciation (see Appendix F).

Second, from the class of the teacher volunteer, the researcher asked for student volunteers (see Appendix G). Originally, 7 student volunteers (5 plus 2 for attrition) were requested, but only 6 student participants volunteered. The researcher visited the class to explain the research and asked for participants from the class. Students received a letter that outlined the
research and if students were 18 or older, they were required to sign a consent form in order to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix H). If a student were under 18 years of age, a letter was also sent to the parents or guardians of this student (see Appendix I). The letter explained the study and required that the parents or guardians sign the letter in order to demonstrate a willingness to participate. If it had been necessary, the letters would have been translated into the students or parents’ first language.

All 6 student participants spoke a variety of languages; some of their first and additional languages were Belarussian, Gujarati, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. In addition, there was a wide range in language ability: ESL A/B, ESL C, ESL C/D, ESL D/E, and ESL E. It must be noted that while there were 2 student participants for the middle level grouping (ESL C, ESL C/D) and higher level grouping (ESL D/E, and ESL E), only 1 student volunteered from the lower level grouping (ESL A/B). Thus, only 1 person’s opinion represents the lower level learners within the case study participants. Also, with the lower level ESL students, it was taken into consideration that cross-cultural research is challenging and more open to frequent misunderstandings and miscommunications than traditional fieldwork (Patton, 1990). Seidman (1998) reminds researchers to be conscious of Vygotsky’s (1987) comments: “the issue of finding the right word in English…to represent the full sense of the word the participants [use] in their native language is demanding and requires a great deal of care” (p. 88). Patton (1990) affirms the importance of careful wording in cross-cultural interviews: “There are words and ideas that simply can’t be translated” (p. 338). Therefore, with the lower level student, when we were unable to communicate due to his low level of English language proficiency, questions were rephrased or I spoke in Spanish which is his additional language. It was kept in mind that when rephrasing questions, there must be caution about not rephrasing topic questions so differently that the “comparability of the responses [is] reduced” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 271). Goldstein (1995) offers an alternative to rephrasing questions; she worked with a linguistic and cultural interpreter to “ask meaningful questions in cross-cultural interviews” (p. 592). Still, Patton (1990) warns a translator can also threaten validity because of their temptation to summarize or explain responses.

Overall, through using the “maximum variation sampling” strategy, conclusions about common themes are firmly based. They are not idiosyncrasies of the study, since students who
are from a variety of ESL levels and diverse cultural backgrounds and the teacher from a different cultural background all described common themes.

Data Collection

Originally, the data collection period was to follow the natural progression of the course (5 months) – September to January; however, a school board ethical review committee did not approve of this data collection period during September and January. Therefore, data collection occurred between October and December (see Table 1). By following the multi-level ESL class during the semester, it was easier to monitor how students’ and their teacher’s experiences developed. This increases the internal validity of the study because a “lengthy data collection period provides opportunities for continual data analysis, comparison, and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between research-based categories and participant reality” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 391).

The data for this study was gathered via a variety of collection procedures: semi-structured interviews, observations, and written journals. Merriam (1998) comments on this being a typical procedure in case studies: “in case studies all three modes of data collection are typically employed” (p. 148). By using a variety of collection procedures, the strengths of each type of data collection were maximized while the weaknesses of any single approach were minimized. This follows the “data triangulation” approach to data collection (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003).

Table 1: Data collection schedule-interviews, observations, and journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>October 2, 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Lower Level Student)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bina</td>
<td>October 9, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Middle Level Student)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>October 25, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Middle Level Student)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>October 2, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Higher Level Student)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rame</td>
<td>October 9, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Higher Level Student)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Mr. Orellana (Teacher) | October 18, 2007  
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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 27, 2007</td>
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<td></td>
<td>December 18, 2007</td>
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| Extra Participant     | October 29, 2007  
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 22, 2007</td>
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| Observation 1 of all participants in ESL classroom | October 5, 2007 |

| Observation 2 of all participants in ESL classroom | October 26, 2007 |

| Observation 3 of all participants in ESL classroom | November 8, 2007 |

| Observation 4 of all participants in ESL classroom | November 23, 2007 |

| Observation 5 of all participants in ESL classroom | December 13, 2007 |

| Observation 6 of all participants in ESL classroom | December 20, 2007 |

| Journal | Archie | October, 2007  
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| Bina | October 22, 2007  
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| Natalie | October 31, 2007  
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<td></td>
<td>November, 2007</td>
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<td>December, 2007</td>
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| Mark | October 13, 2007  
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<td>November 25, 2007</td>
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| Rame | October, 2007  
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<td>November, 2007</td>
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<td>December, 2007</td>
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| Mr. Orellana | November 14, 2007  
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<td></td>
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| Extra Participant | October, 2007  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November, 2007</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Entry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bina</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<td>Rame</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Orellana</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Participant</td>
<td>No Entry</td>
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</table>
First, 6 students and the teacher were interviewed separately on a monthly basis in the school (October-December). Again, ethical reviews forbade interviews in September and January. Therefore, there were a total of seven interviews per month in October and November; however, in December a student failed to show so there were only six interviews. Overall, there were 20 interviews. The student who failed to show for the December interview was dropped from the case study since only 5 students were required. This student was an advanced level student. Therefore, his dropping out did not affect the sampling because there were still two other advanced level students in the sample.

Each interview was semi-structured and lasted as long as necessary to gather all of the data that was relevant to the interview. An interview guide focused the interviews (see Appendix J-M). Occasionally, the ESL A/B student needed to have questions rephrased or translated into Spanish even though the questions were constructed using simple English to ensure comprehension by the participants. The questions consist of experience/behaviour questions, opinion/values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions (Patton, 1990). By being time efficient and flexible, the interview guide is conducive to developing rapport because it enables sensitivity to the participants’ needs. For example, I was well aware of the pressures the participants had on their time due to school work and employment and I respected their need to change interview dates due to this pressure. Through building rapport, I gained a better understanding of the participants: “when people [feel] the interviewer less threatening, they often [feel] more open about what they [believe]” (Scott, 1984, p. 433). Shah (2004) states, “…the quality of the responses considerably depends upon ‘getting on’ with the respondents or achieving social access” (p. 558). Seidman (1998) claims: “interviewing is both a research methodology and a social relationship that must be nurtured…the interviewer must be acutely aware of his or her own experience with them as well as sensitive to the ways these issues may be affecting the participants” (pp. 81-83). Goldstein (1995) calls for researchers to have cultural sensitivity while interviewing in multicultural/multilingual settings: “…I discovered that my ability to ask meaningful questions in cross-cultural research interviews depended on…an awareness of the norms…and a shared background knowledge about these experiences…” (p. 592).

Through this approach, the emerging patterns and discrepant data were discovered. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim; in the transcriptions, all errors were left
which allows for an accurate reflection of the participants’ language. Continuously, the following
data collection strategies were employed to increase reliability: “member checking”, “participant
review”, and “negative cases or discrepant data” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). “Member
checking” refers to checking the data with participants for accuracy during data collection.
“Participant review” means that the researcher asks the participant to review the researcher’s
synthesis of all interviews for accuracy of representation. “Negative cases or discrepant data” is
defined as actively searching for data that are an exception to emerging patterns. Also, field
notes were taken after each interview and were cross-checked with the audiotape. The
information gathered from one set of interviews helped to create the interview guide for the next
interviews. This facilitated the recognition of emerging patterns among the participants as the
data was expanded on, clarified, and explored.

Second, the observations took place on a semi-monthly basis in the ESL subject
classroom from October to December for a total of six observations overall. As mentioned
earlier, I was a non-participant observer. Each observation lasted the length of the class: 72
minutes. The observation was open-ended, but in order to guide the observation, a check list was
used in order to focus on the common elements that are crucial in field observations (Patton,
1990): the setting, the patterns of interaction among the participants and the people in the
classroom, the description of the program activities, the unplanned activities and the nonverbal
communication. A field record was kept during the observation. After the observation, notes
were reviewed and a formal record of the field observation was written. These observations
augmented the interviews and the cross-validation of previous findings was done which lead to
the discovery of new patterns that were missed in the interviews. Merriam (1998) comments on
this holistic nature of the data collection: “…the process is generally very interactive…you
observe something on-site that you then ask about in an interview; or something may come to
your attention in a document that manifests itself in an observation and perhaps informal
conversation in the context of the observation” (p. 148).

Finally, each month participants were given questions that asked them to comment on
their feelings about being in a multi-level language ability classroom and at the end of each
month, the journals were collected. Most participants wrote 3 journals for a total of 18 journal
entries. In order to focus the journal writing, questions were posed: “When you look at the
week’s lessons, how did you feel about the multi-level classroom?” It was hoped that the
journals would provide greater insight into the participants’ perspectives. The Level A/B student had the option to write his journals in his first language or in Spanish. Through having access to this data, previous findings were cross-checked and features that could have been missed in both the interviews and the fieldwork were recognized. Merriam (1998) indicates that personal documents such as journals allows for the researcher to gather data which provides significant insight into the inner feelings of participants’ attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world although highly subjective. Overall, Merriam (1998) summarizes that journals reflect the”…participant’s perspective, which is what most qualitative research is seeking” (p. 116). In general, journals are another source which can be used in conjunction with interviews and observations in order to triangulate emerging findings or to substantiate the data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis strategies were inductive: emerging categories and patterns were looked for in the data. There were three phases: coding the data into topics, grouping the topics into categories, and understanding the common patterns and their interrelations (Merriam, 1998; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). After each phase, I returned to the prior phase in order to double-check and refine the analysis and interpretation.

After all the transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly, data was sorted into units of meaning called topics. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) recommend reading at least three data sets before generating topics. Topics were descriptive names for the subject matter. While sorting these topics, major topics, unique topics, and leftover topics were scrutinized (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). A major topic is defined as a common topic that emerges from the data. A unique topic is a topic that seems important to the research purpose in spite of the rarity of its occurrence. A leftover topic is a topic that does not seem important at that moment, but that may or may not become important as the data collection continues. For each transcript and field note, a table of contents was generated which indicates which topics are present in the data.

After organizing the topics, they were grouped under certain categories. A category name is an abstract name that represents the meaning of similar topics. These categories were emic in nature. To establish these emic categories, data was analyzed in several ways such as asking students questions which lead to more refined answers, analyzing many possible meanings in the data from the most probable to the most improbable, and questioning the data
when there are “red flags” such as extreme answers like “always” or “never” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). These phrases signal a need to take a closer look and to ask more questions of the data (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 493).

After creating categories in the data, common patterns and the interrelations among these common patterns were sought in the data. Initially, “hunches” were noted and then techniques such as: “triangulation”, “evaluating discrepant or negative evidence”, “ordering/sorting categories for patterns”, and “constructing integrative diagrams” were utilized (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). The coding of the data was done through giving each question a number, each interview a number, and each participant a number; however, to simplify the coding only the first, second, or third interview has been indicated in the data analysis. Also, it should be noted that it is always clearly indicated prior to the citations as to which participant is speaking.

Questionnaires

As mentioned earlier, the research also draws on the quantitative research paradigm. More specifically, this research incorporates quantitative questionnaires to gather data on the effect of multi-level groupings in ESL secondary school classes as it relates to the larger ESL school population and ESL teachers: descriptive statistics. In Japan, the multi-level groupings’ research of Yoshida (1998) shows that this method can been used to collect data about program preferences from over 1100 ESL students registered in an ESP course. Using a bilingual Japanese/English electronic mail survey, Yoshida collected data about such topics as instruction, materials, out-of-class opportunities for English use, student placement by skill level, class size, student choice of assignments and programming. Similarly, Connor (1995) used a survey to collect data about Illinois elementary, junior and secondary school second language teachers’ use of target language in multi-level classes.

Dörnyei (2003b) remarks that the definition of a questionnaire is not straightforward since the word is already a misnomer considering it does not usually contain statements that end with a question mark and it often is synonymous with other words such as inventories, surveys, and batteries, to name a few. Brown (2001) defines a questionnaire as a “written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements [that are typically factual, behavioural, or attitudinal] to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (p. 6). Dörnyei (2003b) states that some of the advantages of the questionnaire are its efficiency in terms of researcher time, researcher effort,
cost, and processing. Also, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) state that “the questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher… (p. 245). Although in community of practice research, there are few studies which use solely questionnaires, in L2 motivation research, “…almost all motivation assessment uses some sort of ‘self-report’ measure, that … elicits the respondents’ own accounts from which to make inferences” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 199). Moreover, Dörnyei, (2001b) stresses “motivational data can be gathered in a number of ways… but by far the most common method has been the use of attitude/motivation questionnaires with primarily closed items…” (p. 189). Similarly, on a one time basis, this research uses closed-ended questionnaires to collect data on ESL multi-level ability groupings and their effect on participation, identity formation and development, and motivation from participants selected through “convenience sampling.” All students who are on the school ESL School List (students who have been in Canada for 5 years or less) and ESL subject teachers were invited to participate. However, the sampling was “purposive” in that these students and teachers were in multi-level ability groupings’ classes.

Sample

Dörnyei (2003b) describes “convenience sampling” as the most common type in L2 research. Typically, members of the target populations are chosen if they satisfy certain practical criteria such as geographical proximity or availability. Again, the participants for this questionnaire were selected from the same School Board secondary school described in the sample description for the case study. Since the questionnaire is quantitative in nature, the sample was larger than the case study sample. All ESL subject teachers who were teaching the ESL subject classes such as civics/careers, computer and information science, drama, French, geography, history, introduction to anthropology, psychology and sociology, learning strategies, mathematics, and science and all students who were on the ESL School List (students who have been in Canada for 5 years or less) were invited to participate. In order to obtain participants, volunteers from these two different groups were requested. Similar to the meeting called for the case study, first, all ESL teachers who have multi-level language ability groupings were invited to a meeting where the nature of the questionnaire was explained and teachers were asked to participate. These staff members received a letter that outlined the research and by the act of
going on-line to the web site, they showed their willingness to participate in the questionnaire (see Appendix N).

Second, students who were on the ESL School List (students who have been in Canada for 5 years or less) were called to a meeting to receive information about the case study (see Appendix O). At this meeting, I explained the nature of the questionnaire and requested participants. Like the case study, students received a letter that outlined the research (see Appendix P). If the student were 18 or older, they signed a consent form in order to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the study. If a student were under 18 years of age, a letter was sent to the parents or guardians of this student (see Appendix Q). The letter explained the study and required that the parents or guardians sign the letter in order to demonstrate a willingness to participate. If necessary, the letters would have been translated into the students’ or parents’ first language.

**Data Collection**

The questionnaire was accessible on-line and done on a one-time basis near the end of the semester (see Table 2). It was taken at this time in order to allow for the addition or modification of the items based on the data collected in the case study interviews, observations, and journal entries. The questionnaire mirrored the themes of initial interview questions. However, unlike the semi-structured interviews, the items were close-ended and participants chose responses from a 6-point Likert scale: “my personal preference…has been…to use a six-point scale…” (Dörnyei, 2003b, p. 38). The questionnaire consisted of five main sections for both the students and the teachers: Background, Nature of overall experience, Participation, Identity and Motivation (see Appendix R-S). ESL A and ESL B students could have had questions rephrased or could have gotten the help of a translator if they could not comprehend due to their low level of English language proficiency.

**Table 2: Data collection schedule-on-line questionnaires.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td></td>
<td>ESL teachers</td>
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Data Analysis

Since this study focuses on a particular sample of English language learners, ESL students at Parkdown, it does not generalize the findings to a wider ESL population outside of Parkdown. The primary method for analyzing the questionnaire data was through descriptive statistics: “Descriptive statistics are useful, for example, to describe the achievement of a particular class of learners…” (Dörnyei, 2003b, p. 115). The main advantage of this statistical procedure is that it enables the researcher to sum up the data: the “measures of central tendency” or the highest weighted scores can be generated for the questionnaire. The questions of each section were assigned a number for scoring purposes: “…the scores for the items addressing the same target are summed up or averaged (Dörnyei, 2003b, p. 37). In this case, the highest weighted score of 21 questions was done for all of the 38 student participants (lower, middle, and higher level participants together) and again for the 25 teacher participants who completed the online questionnaire. For the student participants, these responses were then intersected with the highest weighted score for each ability level. Through this, one can evaluate how each of the level groups compares or contrasts with the overall group. This data could then also be measured against the case study participants’ data.

However, due to the small sample sizes of the lower and middle level students, only 2 participants from each of the lower and middle level learners finished in comparison to 34 of the higher level participants, the lower and middle level participants’ data cannot be seen as significant. The data can only serve as a reference point. As a result, only the higher level and teacher data is highlighted throughout the discussion sections. According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993), “the use of descriptive statistics is the most fundamental way to summarize data, and it is indispensable in interpreting the results of quantitative research” (p. 192).

Ethics

In order to fulfill the ethical requirements for this study, the researcher took several measures. First, she followed the necessary steps to get the OISE, and University of Toronto Ethics’ Committee approval and the School Board. Next, as already mentioned in the sample section, the researcher informed all participants, both verbally and in writing, about the study and had all participants sign a consent form. Furthermore, if participants were under the age of 18, the researcher sent a letter to the parents or guardians that fully explained the research and required their permission for their son or daughter to participate. As well, the researcher did not
include the names of the participants in the study, but rather requested that participants choose a pseudonym. Furthermore, at all times, case study participants had access to field notes, their personal interview transcripts, and their personal journals. Moreover, participants always had the choice not to respond to any questions asked by the researcher.

Overview of Data Chapters

The next four chapters, Chapters 4 to 7, provide an overview of the data for the lower, middle, and higher level student participants as well as the teacher participant. Initially, each chapter provides an introductory letter which has been organized by the researcher but approved and re-written “in their own words” by the various participant groups. Then, there is a portrait of each of the participants focusing on background and classroom behaviour. This is followed by a highlighted list of questionnaire responses for each participant group which have been selected because they best support the data for the individual participant groups; these relevant questions are later referenced in the data analysis. The data analysis is organized around the core research questions whereby key themes are underscored; the analysis is supported by references to the literature review and the conceptual frameworks. Finally, the chapters end with a brief indication that the two conceptual frameworks can be indeed be linked.

Following these four chapters, Chapter 8 provides a cross-analysis of the previous four chapters which highlights the data in relation to multi-level language ability groupings literature, and emerging themes. Also, there is a discussion of the two conceptual frameworks and their relation to the data. This analysis leads to the proposal of a model which integrates aspects of the two conceptual frameworks. Chapter 9 offers final thoughts where key findings are summarized, conceptual implications are reviewed, institutional and teacher education implications are suggested, and limitations and areas for further research are given. To conclude, an Epilogue is presented.
Chapter 4 – Lower Level Students

Hi Guys,
So you wanna know how I feel in a multi-level class? Well, because the work’s mostly the same for everybody it’s kinda boring and a little bit difficult for me, sometimes I wish for more speaking and group-work activities I really like that all teachers are helping me one-to-one with some school work and co-curricular activities because low-level student like me need more attention and help from the teachers, sometimes I feel bad when our teacher first help to low-levels and then to high-level and he don’t have enough of time for all of them, that is so not fair. I don’t want to get a lot of attention for me so I kinda feel shy when I’m asking my teacher for help. Sometimes I’m asking other high-level students for help and it’s really cool, because the students speaks my language always can help me. And when I’m looking to high-level students I really want to learn how to speak English better. I feel good in mixed class because everybody there are making mistakes so I don’t feel bad. And some times low-levels are helping each other too even I helped to some low-levels too. So sometimes I feel like we are one big family, and sometimes like all families we get on each other nerves. Sometimes high-levels get tired of explaining stuff to low-levels, and sometimes I feel down when I’m sitting beside high-levels and I’m kinda jealous to them because I can’t speak English as well as them. But anyways I still want to participate in the class, I feel motivated because they are my friends now and we hang out after school. After all, I’m the only one person who decides how motivated I’m. Even when I feel sad, I can imagine how their help and our class work will help me in the future, especially the job, because I want to help to my family. I can actually use another language with my new friend, and I can get a new job using my another language. So I really want to focus on studying so it can help with my future. Because Canada gives me a new life with a lot of opportunities for me. So I think we- newcomers we should stick together so we can help to each other and our families in our new lives here in Canada! Chao!

Archie

(A summary of Archie’s responses rewritten by Archie)

Portrait of Archie

Background

Archie is a male from Belarus. He immigrated to Canada at the age of 16. At the time of the research, he had only been in Canada for 2 months. Before coming to Canada, he studied English for 10 years. He lives with both of his parents in an apartment. To help his parents, he works in a Russian store. He speaks four languages: Belarussian, Russian, Spanish, and English. He is a grade 11 ESL B English language learner (lower level) taking GLS (Learning Strategies), Physical Education, Math and Spanish. His hobbies are skateboarding, soccer, and travel. He especially enjoys visiting Spanish-speaking countries. He dresses as a skateboarder and punk. At school, he is sometimes shy with his teachers, but he is self-motivated because he wants to integrate into Canadian society. He has a high attendance record and maintains a good average. His close friends are other immigrants who speak Russian and Spanish. He supports many of these students with translation in ESL classes or regular classes. He chooses not to get involved in co-curricular activities because he prefers to work.
Classroom

At the beginning of the semester Archie sits quietly in the back row of the class with an ESL A (low beginner level) student speaking Spanish. Archie is disengaged. He doodles. He is urged by the teacher to do work. He does not do what is asked of him. Instead, he chats quietly with his ESL A friend. The teacher circulates throughout the room trying to help many people and since Archie is quiet, he is not approached again by the teacher to get him back on topic. In a final activity of one class where they are singing a song, Archie copies the model of the song, but does not look at it when they sing nor does he fill in the blanks for his own song verse. In a few weeks, Archie has been moved to the front of the class with his ESL A friend. At the beginning of the class, he answers when called upon, but his answers are limited due to his lack of proficiency. Often, he is disengaged in the activity with his ESL A friend. He wanders to find his teacher, Mr. Orellana, but gets distracted talking to other students who share his first language so then he returns to his seat. He does his Spanish homework. Two weeks after this, Archie and his ESL A friend are still sitting together at the front. At the beginning of the class, Archie “works quietly”, is “focused,” and “serious.” He uses Spanish to help his ESL A friend with seat work given by the supply teacher. He answers some of work by copying directly from the booklet; however, once he has to answer in his own words, he stops: he cannot do his homework. At 2:20 he chats in Spanish, at 2:30 he chats in Russian, at 2:50 he is doing nothing; he plays with a toy skateboard with the ESL A student. When considering the time he has been disengaged, it shows that he has done nothing for more than half of the class; this seems to be his pattern throughout all of the observations. After the first term of the semester is over, Archie and his ESL A friend are still at the front of the class doing little work: they “still talk and pay little attention” to the class work. He is supposed to be preparing rough notes for test-taking strategies. When they are to participate in a game, he jokes with his ESL A friend by “…[hitting] each other at the start of the game like football.” He then looks for a pencil, suggests a few words for the word game momentarily, and then he stands back and lets others participate. Close to the end of the semester when the teacher is not in the classroom because of an error in time, Archie plays on the computer at the back of the class beside his ESL A friend. He makes no effort to prepare for the class. Overall, his engagement with the work is minimal: the majority of his time is spent speaking Spanish with his ESL A friend; occasionally, he uses Russian with other students; he does not actively seek the help of the teacher so often he is sitting
and doing nothing throughout the period; however, since he is quiet, it seems that the teacher rarely approaches him.

*Questionnaire Responses-Lower Level Students*

Out of the 53 respondents, 4 ESL A or lower level students participated in the questionnaire; however, 2 of those participants did not finish the questionnaire; hence, only 2 lower level students completed the questionnaire.

Below in Table 3, 21 questions are presented which represent the highest weighted score for all participants (lower, middle, and higher level students) in the online questionnaire. From this group of responses, based on a weighted-score, the most important for the lower level participants have been highlighted.

It must be noted that given the small sample size for the lower level learners in the online questionnaire, little significance can be given to these responses in comparison to Archie’s views on the multi-level ESL classroom. Despite this, it is still fascinating to note the similarities. These similarities are noted in this chapter.

**Table 3: Online questionnaire responses-lower level participants.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Questionnaire Questions</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, then I do feel welcomed in the school.</td>
<td>16 12 6 2 2</td>
<td>Overall / Average 190 / 5 Lower Levels / Average 10 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my participation in the community outside of school in such activities as jobs and clubs.</td>
<td>17 10 4 3 3 1</td>
<td>184 / 4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I get frustrated in classes that have students from different levels of English, I remind myself of how important it is for my future to keep working hard.</td>
<td>14 11 5 5 2 1</td>
<td>179 / 4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am in classes with students from different levels of English, I am able to ask for help from other students.</td>
<td>7 16 11 2 1 1</td>
<td>175 / 4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my involvement in activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>9 11 12 4 2</td>
<td>173 / 4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am doing group-work in classes that have students from different levels of English, I like working with students who are at the same level as I am.</td>
<td>7 20 3 3 5</td>
<td>173 / 4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help me get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>8 10 14 5 1</td>
<td>171 / 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English.</td>
<td>9 13 9 3 2 2</td>
<td>170 / 4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from all different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help increase my ability to take part in the class.</td>
<td>11 10 9 3 4 1</td>
<td>170 / 4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I feel like I have a lot to offer to teams, or clubs.</td>
<td>7 17 5 4 3 2</td>
<td>167 / 4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there are classes that have students from different levels of English, I am happy that the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.</td>
<td>8 14 9 2 2 3</td>
<td>167 / 4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, I also do feel welcomed in the community outside of school.</td>
<td>7 15 7 5 1 3</td>
<td>165 / 4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.</td>
<td>9 11 9 3 5 1</td>
<td>165 / 4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I see myself as an important member because I work or I am in a club or an organization.</td>
<td>6 13 11 3 4 1</td>
<td>163 / 4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I do feel welcomed by other students and teachers.</td>
<td>5 16 8 4 3 2</td>
<td>162 / 4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available to provide me with the time I need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.</td>
<td>7 15 6 2 6 2</td>
<td>161 / 4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than other classes.</td>
<td>10 10 8 1 6 3</td>
<td>160 / 4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there were extra work to do for multi-level classes, I would volunteer to do it because I know that it is good for my learning.</td>
<td>3 16 9 7 2 1</td>
<td>160 / 4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like working with students who have the same level of English.</td>
<td>7 13 7 4 4 3</td>
<td>158 / 4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In classes with different levels of English, most of the students can do work independently with little help from the teacher.</td>
<td>6 15 3 8 5 1</td>
<td>158 / 4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from different levels of English, the teacher helps me to feel positively about my classroom experience.</td>
<td>7 10 13 2 2 4</td>
<td>158 / 4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter primarily addresses the four main research questions with regard to the lower level English language learner (ESL A/ESL B) and then, hints at linking the two conceptual frameworks.

*Nature of the ESL students’ overall experience in a multi-level classroom with regard to the multi-level language groupings literature*

This section looks at Archie’s experience in a multi-level classroom with reference to his course material, his teacher, and his peers.

*Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their course material in a multi-level classroom*

**Same Work.** Archie acknowledges that he has practically the same work as the other levels. He finds work difficult or boring; he wishes for more speaking and group activities. He explains that only occasionally do the lower level students have different work from the higher level students: “Only sometimes with the homework” (Interview 2). This point is supported by classroom observations where frequently ESL As are not on task and look completely lost as to what is expected from them. In fact, this challenge of providing different work is raised by Bell (1991): “How can a teacher possibly gather all these disparate threads together in a curriculum? This is the most serious problem of the multi-level class…” (p. 11). Later, she explains it is not unusual for teachers to use the same work for all levels: “Commonly, teachers put in this position compromise, select a text that suits the middle of the class, and to try to adapt the exercises to suit individual students” (p. 30). However, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) emphasize “if the instructor plans activities that meet only the needs of learners whose skills fall in the middle, those learners with lower skills may become frustrated, and those with more advanced skills may become bored” (p. 2).

**Work is Difficult.** Another issue regarding his classroom work is that he is often unable to volunteer: “Mmmm… I speak when the teacher ask me some question I try to answer this question or sometimes if I know what to say, I try to say it… About maybe 10%” (Interview 2). Moreover, he describes the inability of fellow lower level learners in other multi-level classes as paralleling his experience when asked about mixing lower level students with higher level students: “Oh, I think this will be bad because I know some students with ESL A who have math in this semester so they don’t understand what teacher saying. They don’t understand what teacher want of them. So they don’t know what to do. They fail their tests something…” (Interview 3). Again, this inability to participate occasionally is stressed in the observation notes.
taken on Archie where he is frequently disengaged; instead, he plays or chats with his ESL A friend. Similarly, other lower level students are frequently distracted with toys or the computer and have, like Archie, isolated themselves at the back of the classroom. Bell (1991) also highlights that the greatest challenge for the ESL multi-level course is the question: “What can I give them to do that …won’t be too difficult for the beginners?” (p. 10). Hess (2001) notes that educators have great challenges with lower level learners and “…feel discouraged when only a few students participate and …cannot manage activating a great many others, who look and act bored” (p. 7). Moreover, Merson (1997) recalls her lower level students’ silence speaking to her: “I interpret her silence to mean that the lesson or activity at hand is beyond her and she needs support. And when I ask her to confirm my interpretation, ‘Do you understand?’ she says, ‘No’” (p. 48). Bruzzese and Dedmon (1997) caution that overall “students who can’t keep up with the class get frustrated and drop-out” (p. 46). Nevertheless, Balliro (1997) warns that “silence does not necessarily indicate boredom, confusion, or passivity” (p. 15).

**Preference for Speaking in Groups.** Another point raised by Archie is his preference for a greater focus on speaking and group work throughout the course. He mentions that when he speaks to his same level peers, he feels positively about the experience: “Because I can speak with them a lot. A lot. A lot” (Interview 2). He sees himself as an extrovert with them because he feels the freedom to speak. As well, when he is asked what kinds of exercises he prefers to do in class he clearly focuses on conversation and group activities: “Let me see… (The participant searches the dictionary.) Speak English with partners. More speak with partners. Like… Group work. I mean some project with ahhh… with presentation” (Interview 2). Moreover, in the final interview, he stresses his preferences for speaking activities and he explains that speaking enables him to participate both in and out of the classroom: “Mmmm… because it’s like good exercise for you. For example, for explain something to the teacher or to the class we must think what you saying… It’s because making friends, or ask somebody for help in the street or to go to any shop and ask help in the shop or something like this” (Interview 3). In 2 of the 3 monthly journals, again he comments on the value he places on conversation and group work strategies when asked about the nature of his overall experience with regard to the course material and his peers:

> Some material really help me like: how to do good presentation: I have a presentation by Spanish. So I use material what I learn at GLS and take a high mark. Conversational strategies: I start to use some words like: Can I get a word in...; sorry
to interrupt by... And the people start to speak with me more. I start to speak with people more and I think my English it’s improve for a little. (Journal 1)

Again, in his third journal he celebrates his speaking and group work strategies: “So I learn many strategies. Many of this strategies help me in real life. For example: some strategies like strategies for presentation and I get a good mark. Some test preparing strategies help me too. And group work strategies helps me on my work” (Journal 3). Similarly, in the questionnaire, the lower level learners generally show an interest in doing group work with their multicultural peers. Bell (1991) also mentions that students enjoy interaction with their multicultural classmates: “The very variety of age, race, and background leads to interesting differences in viewpoint and experience, so that natural interactions are possible between students” (p. 16). She concurs with the lower level students: “Students should be encouraged to interact rather than having the conversation limited to the teacher and individual learners” (p. 81). Similarly, Yoshida (1998) outlines that some features to include in a multi-level English course is “many out-of-class opportunities for students to use English in natural settings [social activities]” (p. 72).

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their teacher in a multi-level classroom

Individual Attention. First, Archie states that he prefers to ask for one-on-one teacher support rather than peer support because often peers do not provide accurate information: “Because sometimes teacher can explain like more better than my friend for example. Ahhh… because teacher always explain it right with or without any mistakes cause sometimes my friends can tell me with mistakes and I can do for example other work” (Interview 2). Specifically, he appreciates this teacher attention to be in the form of corrective feedback for his speaking because he feels more free to speak when he knows that someone will help him improve: “Because sometimes you say something wrong so the teacher explain you the mistake so you remember your mistake try to…Ya, try to improve yourself…” (Interview 3). Merson (1997) comments that although she intends to focus on other issues in a multi-level class, “…we are instead working intensively one-on-one with the early students. This time feels so valuable to their progress that it is rewarding for all of us” (p. 48). Moreover, this desire to have teacher-focussed attention by the lower level learners is highlighted by Merson (1997) when she converses with a lower level student: she inquires what the student does when she has problems and the student says she asks the teacher instead of another student because sometimes students
laugh or do not want to help (pp. 49-50). Later, Merson (1997) concludes, “...I have this nagging feeling that the one most common strategy-relying on the teacher, the authority figure to answer the question-is so comfortable that this strategy might be the one students prefer in any setting” (p. 51). Mathes-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) also point out that adolescents in multi-level classrooms need more one-to-one attention and guidance than adults. Finally, Archie explains that the lower level learners require the majority of the individualized teacher’s attention because it is they who usually do not understand the exercises; when asked who the teacher is usually helping, he quickly responds: “For ESL A...AB” (Interview 1). Hess (2001) stresses that in the large multi-level class, “teachers cannot be everywhere at the same time, and cannot service the immediate needs of all students (p. 10). As well, Leu (1997) highlights that “because ESL children are not yet proficient in English language, they demand more of the teacher’s time because they need to practice more in using the target language” (p. 26). Archie repeats this sentiment in the final interview when he considers his multi-level ESL teacher in comparison to regular classroom teachers: the ESL teacher spends more time on individual students (Interview 3). Likewise, in the questionnaire, the lower level students mostly agree that teachers are available to support their individual needs. In fact, after observing Archie, it appears that without the individual contact from his teacher, he is not likely to focus on his work since often he is left sitting and chatting with his ESL A friend. For instance, once when Archie goes to look for his teacher, he gets distracted, returns to his seat without getting his question answered and then proceeds to do homework from his Spanish class. Similarly, in observing the other lower level learners, their need of individual attention is obvious. They would not do their work on several occasions without teacher explanation and translation; often they wander the classroom when they do not understand their work. Bell (1991) underlines that, “the teacher also has to bear in mind that it is impossible to be all things to all people. There will always be students who want more of your individual time that you can give” (p. 15). She continues with “… the beginners will need intensive help to provide missing knowledge” (p. 29). Bruzzese and Dedmon (1997) point out that “students need to know they aren’t alone with the problem. By sitting alongside them, the teacher helps them feel less tense, more at ease. Students can confide some of the gaps in their knowledge...Students feel less comfortable admitting their gaps in a large group setting” (p. 46).
Advisor Beyond the Classroom. In addition, Archie views his teacher not only as a primary resource for curricular activities, but also for co-curricular involvement; he often asks his teacher for information about the soccer tryouts: “In when this school year start, I want to participate in school football team, I ask Mr. Orellana when is the like [tryouts]” (Interview 2). Moreover, on school teams, he says that it would be the teacher/coach who would help him to feel comfortable on the team (Interview 1). Yoshida (1998) underscores that students dislike “professors who are too busy to chat with students” (p. 73). Similarly, Balliro (1997) discusses that students

…need assistance with so many things beyond the academic…I feel they just don’t get the support they need other places in their lives, so I try to help as much as I can. In addition to teaching, I spend a lot of time solving problems for them, dealing with health, work tenant and other issues in their lines, one on one…; however, boundaries are where you can reasonably draw limits between yourself and, in this case, your students. If you have no boundaries, you will simply burn yourself out… (p. 53).

Shy. Finally, another key issue raised on several occasions by Archie is that he tends to be shy with some teachers (Interview 1). He explains that it is his nature to be shy, and not something that a teacher does in the classroom: “It’s me. I’m a little shy” (Interview 2). This shyness could be seen in his three monthly journals when he describes his relationship with his teachers. In all three journals, he writes nothing about this relationship, but rather leaves an empty space.

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their peers in a multi-level classroom

Cooperative Learning. Archie describes the cooperative learning as a positive experience in the multi-level classroom whereby he gains self-confidence because the higher level students help the lower level students: “I’m feeling more sure like this…” (Interview 2). He believes that a benefit of cooperative learning for the higher level learners is that through helping the lower level students, they get to practice their English: “…For higher levels, I think it’s good too because they can improve their English like explain the questions in very simple words so…” (Interview 2). Also, he sees the higher level learners as supports for the teacher when the teacher cannot meet all of the lower level students’ needs: “To just to teach only levels A because ahhh… all students needs help of teacher so if in this classroom the highest levels so teacher can ask them to help to low levels and it’s a little more easy for his work” (Interview 2). In fact, although Archie is a lower level learner, he also helps another student who is lower than
he: “I don’t know. Maybe maybe because I can help them with explanation…if they don’t know like what to do. They ask me. So, I help them” (Interview 3). Hess (2001) acknowledges the importance of cooperative learning in multi-level classes: “In such classes, students can learn as much from one another as they learn from the teacher” (p. 3). Later, Hess states: “…in large multi-level classes collaboration [‘working together and cooperating’] is a must” (p. 10). Pham Phu (2007) also acknowledges that one advantage of the multi-level class is “students can use their skill to help each other” (p. 308). Also, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) recognize the benefit for lower level students when they “interact with more proficient English speakers…” (p. 1).

**Use of First Language.** One tool that facilitates the cooperative learning is the use of students’ first languages for clarification of work: “Mmm… to who I ask questions? Ahhh… ahhh… guys who from Russia. So because they understand me” (Interview 1). Another use of first language is for the higher level learners to correct his speaking in English which makes him feel very happy: “Mmmm… for example, this some people with highest level in Russian so I try maybe to speak with them in English and if I do any terrible mistake they correct me to right way” (Interview 2). Moreover, he sits with a peer who speaks a shared language, Spanish, which allows him continued practice in this language and enables him to voice his opinions since he feels more comfortable in Spanish than in English: “Yes, because I know Spanish more better than English” (Interview 3). This use of a shared language with a peer is evident in the observations where the shared language serves as a scaffolding tool for Archie to help a peer who is at a lower level: “He uses Spanish to help an ESL A student with a sheet of seat work given by the supply teacher” (Observation 3). Also, in his journal, Archie refers to this use of a shared language when he comments on his experience with his peers: “I start to speak with people more and I think my English it’s improve a little. And of course I find friends who speak Spanish. So I improve my English and Spanish. And I try to help some people who have low level of English” (Journal 1). This use of a first or shared language is listed by Bell (1991) as a key support for lower level learners in the multi-level class: “in many cases, they can even ask for this help in their native language if they are having difficulty” (p. 17). Also, Maddalena (2002) mentions that the use of a first language is welcomed by lower level students: “None of the lower levels was perturbed when the helps were occasionally forced to use [the first language], commenting that this often saved valuable time” (p. 6). Likewise, Mathews-Aydinli
and Van Horne (2006) underscore that lower level learners may be at risk of falling “behind if only the second language is used” (p. 2). Bell (1991) lists this oral support as a key benefit of a multi-level class: “Students will give each other important feedback about pronunciation and intelligibility…” (p. 18).

**Role Models.** During cooperative learning, higher level learners not only offer support for lower level students, but also serve as role models for English language proficiency: Archie aspires to be like the higher level classmates on more than one occasion: “I feel good. I want to study more cause I want to be high how students who have high level to speak more faster more mmmm…more good without dictionary… So I want work” (Interview 1). In the second interview, he again comments that the more advanced students inspire him: “Mmmm… I think it’s I think it’s the low levels feeling like they hear like the high levels speaking with the teacher, with other students in very very good English. I think they want to improve English so they want to study more English, for speak like high level” (Interview 2). Similarly, in an observation there is evidence of this role-modeling; frequently the lower level learners monitor what the higher level students do (Observation 4). Maddalena (2002) remarks that “the lower level students were ‘inspired’…by listening to their more able peer tutors…” (p. 6). Likewise, Maddalena (2002) reveals a lower level learner’s feelings of admiration for the higher level students: “…I tried to study to go up to them … the same level” (p. 7). Similarly, Hofer and Larson (1997) stress the importance role modelling: “Being with more advanced students was critical to Janet’s learning… her enthusiasm to write was inspired by the more advanced writers who modeled that writing…” (p. 3).

Moreover, Archie feels that his peers serve as a source of comfort because they offer companionship which fosters a sense of security and hinders loneliness: he feels membership within the ESL family. In two of his monthly journals, he mentions this friendship when he talks about how he feels alone and with his friends: “Thanks to my friends I don’t feel me bad alone. So I feel me more sure…So I have a lot of new friends. All of they are good persons. And if I have any problems they help me” (Journal 1, 3). This welcoming environment provides Archie with a safe context for practicing English. He is not afraid of his peers’ judgement when he speaks: “So I’m feeling good because there are many peoples with low level, with medium level, with high level so… all levels sometimes do mistakes so somebody do a mistake nobody laugh at him so… that’s why I’m feeling good” (Interview 2). In fact, he feels that his comfort is
due to the fact that they have developed a familial relationship: “Yes, maybe like like a family” (Interview 3). Hess (2001) stresses that “…personal contact engenders creates a positive classroom climate that promotes genuine language learning” (p. 3). Bell (1991) lists companionship and support as key reasons why students “tolerate mixed-level classes” (p. 9).

**Higher Level Students Frustrated.** In spite of the supportive environment, Archie feels that there are moments of boredom on the part of the higher level students: “Highest level I think that it’s boring but… sometimes they try to help the lower lower lower levels to do any work, to explain questions, to help with any words” (Interview 2). He repeats this sentiment on several occasions: “Mmmm… maybe they not too happy because some of them must to help to lowest levels very very often. So it’s a little I think it’s a little boring for them whole time to help other students” (Interview 3). Moreover, he states that he notices their boredom through their facial expression or by the speed in which they give support to the lower level learners: “Mmmm… they can make like very very like not very a little angry face like or try to explain like more faster” (Interview 3). When he is asked if he would still ask for support when he sees the higher level peers’ reaction, he explains that this impedes him from asking them for help: “No. I try to do it by myself” (Interview 3).

**Lower Level Students Discontent.** Likewise, Archie occasionally feels tension within himself whereby he is frustrated by his lack of language proficiency: “Mmmm… I think the ESL A sometimes don’t understand what ESL E [high level] can say to the teacher because they use like more hard words for understanding so I think ESL A is like a little disappointed because they don’t understand what he say or she say” (Interview 3). Also, he becomes frustrated when the work is too repetitive even though he is a beginner student (Interview 2). In all of the observations, the lower level students’ seating configuration is notable and could possibly indicate their sense of disappointment in themselves: they sit at the rear of the classroom. In the questionnaire, lower level learners indicate they prefer to work with students who have the same level of English. Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) caution that “students with lower language skills and those who are generally less vocal may naturally segregate themselves from the more outspoken or advanced-level students” (p. 2). Bruzzese and Dedmon (1997) caution that “students who can’t keep up with the class sit at the back and never catch up” (p. 46). Bell (1991) cautions that “another challenge for the teachers is to avoid the students’ perceiving the mixed-ability levels as a problem” (p. 12). Bell (1991) states that “beginners may feel
inadequate in comparison with the stronger students…” (p. 70). Maddalena (2002) recounts a student’s feelings of disappointment in herself: “‘When I couldn’t speak English not at all I was very… shocked by higher level students’ English speaking and I was very angry about it. No, not angry, I mean ashamed…’” (p. 7). As well, Office of Refugee Resettlement (1982) underscores the struggle of the lower level students and recommends approaches to “…help decrease possible feelings of inferiority or insecurity on the part of weaker students” (p. 1).

Moreover, Archie feels shame when the lower level learners monopolize the teacher’s time and the higher level classmates are left to fend for themselves. He explains that he feels bad “because teacher spend more time with with ESL B for A and B” (Interview 3). Similarly, Maddalena (2002) finds that lower level students feel guilty about taking teacher time from the higher level learners: “Whereas S1 prefers a ‘slower’ lesson, she is reluctant to make demands within the class…” (p. 5).

**Nature of ESL students’ participation in a multi-level classroom**

This section highlights factors which enhance and limit Archie’s ability to feel a sense of belonging in a community of practice.

*Factors which enhance students’ ability to belong to a community of practice*

**Peers/Self.** When reviewing the specific questions regarding participation which are based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptual framework of “legitimate peripheral participation” in a community of practice or in this case, the multi-level classroom, Archie generally feels pleased with his participation (Interview 1). Moreover, he frequently cites how he can connect what he does in the classroom to opportunities in the community outside of school. This ability to make connections parallels Wenger’s (1998) discussion on requirements for supporting engagement which leads to identity formation: “…participants in a community of practice contribute in a variety of interdependent ways that become material for building an identity” (p. 271).

Archie cites that one main factor contributing to his participation in the multi-level classroom are his peers. When asked about what makes him feel comfortable, he quickly responds, “My friends” (Interview 1). In fact, this friendship extends beyond the classroom and into the community when he interacts with peers who speak not only his native languages, but also Spanish: “Outside of school? So, I go out with my friends. I go into gym. To shops. To walks, for example. To parks... [with] Spanish-speaking [friends]” (Interview 2).
questionnaire, lower level students confirm that if they feel welcomed by other students, then they feel welcomed beyond the classroom. Archie feels a sense of connection to his English language learner peers because he imagines that they understand his challenges and he imagines that he will achieve language proficiency like them: “students must be enabled to explore who they are, who they are not, who they could be” (Wenger, 1998, p. 272). Hence, for the most part, they are his role models. Through this friendship, he understands how they strive to help each other adjust to Canadian society; they “converge on a joint goal” (Wenger, 1998, p. 274).

Cooperative Learning/Self. Given that his peers serve as role models for him since they feel empathy for him due to his challenges as a lower level, Archie appreciates the benefits of cooperative learning. He gains self-confidence because the higher level students help the lower level students. Yet, he stresses that it is reciprocal because the more advanced students can practice their communication skills. He notes that without cooperative learning the teacher would have a difficult time meeting everyone’s needs. He notes how the peer mentors have the advantage of using their other languages as tools to support their peers. Moreover, he too engages in this with a student who is a lower level. This peer also speaks another language which Archie speaks. Hence, not only does he want to focus on speaking in English, but he also wants to practice this shared language with his peer in the multi-level classroom. Again, he sees this as an useful future tool for helping him find employment in areas of the city that use this language; he is able to imagine possibilities for himself when he feels that the classroom work is not addressing his needs:

…Por ejemplo, si voy a estudiar muy bien espanol puedo ir a algunas tiendas donde trabajan gentes quien hablan espanol y preguntar sobre el trabajo pues esto. [For example, if I’m going to study Spanish very well, I can go to some stores where there are Spanish-speaking people and ask about a job. That’s it.] (Interview 2).

Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self. Although the teacher supports him by acting as a key source of information regarding his co-curricular options, he admits his personal interest dominates his decisions to participate (Interview 2). Within the classroom, he would prefer activities to focus on speaking so that he can engage with others outside of school. He envisions how he could use his speaking outside of the classroom: “I don’t know. Maybe sometimes if somebody ask me time… what time is it? (The participant laughs.) I try to ask him. For example, where is this street? Or where is for example, this shop? Or where is this place? I try to explain” (Interview 2). This desire for speaking so that he may engage others in the
community outside of school shows that he can see the possibilities for himself beyond the classroom. Thus, within this learning context, he is able to get “a sense of the possible trajectories available in various communities…” (Wenger, 1998, p. 272). This supports Wenger’s concept of imagination which is an essential part of legitimate peripheral participation. Again, this is highlighted when he passionately describes his desire to speak to others and use his language as a tool for working in the community:

Algunas palabras en ingles. También me pierdo, me me me puedo ayudar cuando yo voy a buscar trabajo. Por ejemplo como hoy me voy a buscar trabajo. [Also, I get lost, it can help me when I’m going to look for work. For example, like today I’m going to look for work.]… I feel I want to speak English. I want to study English. So, I think like I want to work. I don’t know how to explain this feeling. (Interview 2)

As well, he values how speaking strategies also can serve him to assist customers at his employment who do not share his first language: “Like speaking strategies. How to speak with people. It’s one. It helps sometimes in the shop when coming somebody who don’t speak Russian…” (Interview 3). With these connections, they are no longer possible links to employment, but instead, are actual links which support his real life employment; this job helps his family survive in Canada. It is noteworthy that he links these connections to common goals with his family. This stresses what Wenger (1998) describes as students using both engagement and imagination to focus “their destiny with respect to a broader context” (p. 273).

Likewise, he views group activities as valuable to his participation in clubs at school or in his ability to interact with his colleagues at work: “Maybe, it help. I think it help… I’m working in the shop so in the shop I working like a group of people like 5 cashiers…So we help to each other” (Interview 3). Similarly, the opportunity to work in groups is confirmed by the lower level learners in the questionnaire when they indicate their happiness with their involvement in co-curricular activities. Overall, he feels positively about his experience in the community outside of school where he is able to make a skills transfer from the classroom to the community: he rates it a 4 on a 1 to 6 scale in terms of his happiness (Interview 1). Later, he repeats this satisfaction with his participation in the community and describes that it is because of his job that he feels happy (Interview 3).

Teacher/Self. Finally, he values his teacher’s support for his participation both inside and outside of the classroom in the school community. This is evident when he is asked what
helps him to feel comfortable in co-curricular activities, he clearly states, “Mmmm, I think it’s the teacher” (Interview 1). He describes how teachers help him with joining co-curricular clubs:

Mmmm… por ej… ahhh… sometimes it’s the teacher. For example, in Spanish class… in Spanish class sometimes I want to go to Spanish club. (The participant laughs.) But I for all times I forgot to ask the teacher when this club start, when it have meetings, so sometime no. In when this school year start, I want to participate in school football team, I ask Mr. Orellana when is the like… (Interview 2)

Hence, the teacher helps him to imagine himself in co-curricular roles. Also, in the questionnaire, lower level students show their desire for the teacher to help them to get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama. Archie’s close relationship with his peers and teacher echoes what Wenger (1998) calls for in “educational engagement:” “… a learning community incorporates [social relationships] as essential ingredients of learning in order to maximize the engagement of its members” (p. 272).

Factors which inhibit students’ ability to belong to a community of practice

Course Work. In contrast, when asked specifically what factors in the multi-level classroom inhibit his participation, Archie cites the fact that he feels bored as a negative influence on his desire to participate in the multi-level classroom (Interview 1). He elaborates that the work is boring for him since most of it is reading and repeated multiple times so that the lower level learners can understand:

Why I don’t ask? Maybe because I know how to do this exercise so that’s why I’m not asking. I try to do it by myself…Because I not participate like too much… Mmmm… maybe because sometimes we must to read like a lot of things so sometimes we repeat all these things like all lessons all lesson so that’s a little boring. (Interview 3)

Because of the repetition, he finds that the pace lags. He would prefer more speaking activities rather than reading. Here, he exhibits an inability to invest himself in the context which Wenger (1998) clearly shows as an impediment for engagement; the activities are not meaningful (p. 272). It is for this reason that he engages in Spanish speaking with his peer in the multi-level classroom. He imagines that he could use Spanish language skills for employment opportunities in the future which he sees as directly in line with his family’s goals of surviving in Canada. Wenger would call this alignment or “local actions adding up to a large-scale effect” (p. 271).

Self. Another reason for Archie not participating is that he is occasionally shy with his teacher. He insists that it is the nature of his personality: “It’s me. I’m a little shy” (Interview
2). In addition, he mentions that he has low participation in co-curricular activities. He later explains it is due to his desire to focus on school work or employment (Interview 1).

**Employment.** Although he is discontent about not participating in co-curricular activities, he is happy that he has enough time to focus on his employment or on his studies to gain opportunities for a future employment: “Maybe because I’m a little happy because I’m not participate. Mmmm… I have time for my work, so…” (Interview 3). Therefore, he does not want more work from co-curricular activities. In fact, it is the extra work from co-curricular activities that he lists as making him uncomfortable with participating (Interview 1). He prefers to focus on employment which is aligned with his parents’ needs. It is interesting to note that he searches for a job in an environment that uses his first language or Spanish; he does not consider working in an English speaking environment.

**ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom**

This section examines which factors increase and decrease Archie’s motivation.

*Factors which make students feel most motivated*

**Peers/Self.** When examining the motivation questions which are based on the “Actional Phase” of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation, Archie cites an important source for his motivation in the multi-level classroom or a factor which contributes positively to the “quality of [his] learning experience” is his peer group. He states that he wants to be studying there everyday because he is very happy due to his friends (Interview 1). Moreover, this recognition of the importance of his peers indicates that the nature of the “classroom reward/goal structure” is a cooperative one. In fact, many higher level learners support the lower level students in their common goal of integration into Canadian society; they engage in cooperative learning and act as role models. Moreover, having his friends in the classroom motivates him because he is able to practice his speaking and group work skills: “Because a lot of good peoples. A lot of my friends. So, I speak with them” (Interview 2). It is noteworthy that Archie’s best friend, another lower level Spanish-speaking student, supports Archie in Spanish while Archie helps him with his English. In the questionnaire, students also mention that their teacher helps them to feel positively about their classroom experience.

**Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self.** In fact, his motivation would also be increased if the work were more focused on speaking and group work: “Let me see… (The participant searches the dictionary.) Speak English with partners. More speak with partners.
Like… Group work. I mean some project with ahhh… with presentation” (Interview 2). In the questionnaire, lower level respondents show their preference for working with students who are at the same level when they are engaged in group work. He stresses this preference for speaking because through practicing English in the classroom, he connects to the community outside of school: “Mmmm… because it’s like good exercise for you. For example, for explain something to the teacher or to the class we must think what you saying… It’s because making friends, or ask somebody for help in the street or to go to any shop and ask help in the shop or something like this” (Interview 3). Therefore, the “learner group” positively influences him but it is he who recognizes the possibilities of extending that knowledge from the multi-level classroom to the community at large. Hence, he self-regulates. With these self-regulation strategies, he can increase his ability or see opportunities for increasing his ability to engage in the community on his own.

**Self.** He states it outright on two occasions that his mood is the primary source of his motivation or demotivation: “Me… If I was tired, maybe sad…” (Interview 1). Again, in the second interview, he highlights that he is who most makes him want to learn: “To learn English, yes…” (Interview 2). Hence, his mood is the central factor which contributes to his self-motivation or his “use of self-regulatory strategies” when he is feeling discouraged. On an interesting note, in the questionnaire, lower level learners strongly agree that when they are frustrated, they too remind themselves how important it is for their future that they keep working hard: they self-regulate. Regardless, although there are times when he feels demotivated, he still feels that the multi-level classroom is a positive context for him:

Maybe I want to stay in this class but I don’t know what they want another students. Maybe ESL Es want to go to another class because it’s boring for them…If I’m comfortable with some higher ESL students because they usually help me if I ask them for some help… Mmmm… maybe because maybe it’s because like friendship because any students who’s highest levels are your friends so you don’t want to go to other class with without them. And that’s why. (Interview 3)

Hence, the support that he receives from his peers in terms of companionship which leads to assistance with his speaking and his understanding of group dynamics overshadows the moments when he feels disconnected from the course work. Moreover, he focuses on the benefits of that classroom which can be extended to the school community and the community outside of the school. This includes the added bonus of him focusing on his Spanish skills with his native
speaker friend when cannot engage in the classroom work. Again, this is an example of how his self-regulation is nurtured by an environment that allows for a “sense of autonomy.”

Factors which make students feel least motivated

Self. As stated by Archie, his mood is the driving factor behind his demotivation. His ability to self-regulate is his greatest asset to counteract his lack of motivation.

Course Work. He states that he would feel more motivated if the work were more suited to the different language ability levels: “For high levels more difficult, for low level not very difficult and not very easy. So, something… Mmmm…Ya. In between” (Interview 1). His dissatisfaction with regard to this aspect of the work lowers his motivation: the work is the same for all levels.

ESL students’ identity formation and development vis-à-vis their degree of participation in a multi-level classroom

This section gives light to how Archie sees himself in the classroom, in the school community, and outside of the school community. The labels or roles which he attributes to himself are also identified.

Students’ perception of themselves in the classroom/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

Overall Archie describes himself as outgoing in the multi-level classroom: “Mmm… outgoing… Ya, I feeeel good” (Interview 1). More specifically, he highlights his positive feeling about his peers. He feels comfortable with them because they have a shared experience as newcomers; he feels that they are a sort of “family” both in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, he feels able to speak freely without feeling anxious about his mistakes because he feels the support of his peers: “Yes, maybe like like a family” (Interview 3). With these comments, there emerges the sense of a common bond among the newcomers as they integrate in their many new communities of practice: they share struggles with language proficiency and integration and empathize and support each other through this experience both in and outside of the multi-level classroom. Therefore, he has a developed a new membership in a peer group: he identifies with English language learners and is willing to take on positive roles to support both his learning and others’ learning; he sees that through supporting each other they will achieve greater integration into Canadian society. In the questionnaire, lower level students also agree that student solidarity creates an atmosphere where they feel comfortable with seeking support
from each other. Hence, within the classroom, Archie plays the role of “maybe harmonizer” (Interview 1) whereby he tries to keep his fellow group members happy. Also, he will play the role of a starter if no one else engages: “In groups? In what sort of groups? So, when… ahhh… when ahhh… an ESL group don’t know what to start, I try to start…Yes. Sometimes. If you have group work with many peoples” (Interview 2). Even though Archie is a lower level, he feels the desire to support group work in the multi-level classroom through assuming positive roles such as harmonizer or starter. This suggests that he wishes to not only benefit himself, but also to assist his classmates in the multi-level classroom since they share a common goal of learning English and integrating into Canadian society. He feels empowered by taking ownership of these new roles within the multi-level classroom; he is able to negotiate meaning in this new context where he is aligned with his fellow students in terms of their integration.

Students’ view of themselves in the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

In the school community with teachers, students and activities, he feels content: “… I feel happy” (Interview 1). Outside of the ESL classroom, he looks for other ESL students in the cafeteria or in regular classrooms and confirms that the majority of his friends are immigrants (Interview 3). Although he does not participate in co-curricular activities, he states that if he were participating, he would play two roles: helper or starter (Interview 1). Again, he would seek participation in his peer group to support the common goal of the activities. As well, in the questionnaire, lower level students show strong agreement that they have a lot to offer in co-curricular activities.

Students’ image of themselves outside of the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

Likewise, outside of the school community, he is especially happy with his family and shows contentment with his friends and neighbours: “At home… very happy” (Interview 1). Furthermore, he chooses to be a harmonizer in the community outside of school (Interview 1). Yet again, either in or outside of the school community, he chooses to assume positive group membership roles where he is willing to lead, assist or create group harmony in order to support the cause of his family or friends. Through this, he supports himself, his peers and his loved ones in their common goal of integrating into Canadian society. Again, by being in a multi-level classroom which supports and nurtures these positive roles, he can then imagine how to extend
these roles beyond the multi-level classroom to support both his new peer group and his family in their common goals of integration in the Canadian society. Similarly, in the questionnaire, the lower level participants suggest the importance of their roles in the community at variety of venues such as employment, clubs or organizations.

Through his participation in the multi-level classroom, it can be understood that the formation and development of his identity has been generally positive in that he is able to achieve both “identification” and “negotiability” in the multi-level classroom (Wenger, 1998, p. 188). In “identification,” he feels an investment of himself in the classroom either with his work, his peers, or his teacher (engagement). He feels an affinity toward envisioning possibilities for himself (imagination) and he embraces his peers’ and family’s goals (alignment). In addition, the multi-level classroom supports his ability to participate in “negotiability”: his input is adopted by his peer group and teacher (engagement), he is able to gain “vicarious experience through stories” from his peers and teacher (imagination), and he is active in shaping the shared goals of his peers and family (alignment).

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

When examining Archie’s responses regarding both his desire for participation in the multi-level classroom and his motivation to learn English or other shared languages, the similarities in his answers are striking. This is not surprising since Lave and Wenger (1991) stress that the primary motivation for learning should be to increase participation in a community of practice. Moreover, through desiring to participate or being motivated, there is a greater chance for learners to nourish their identity development. Learners are more likely to see future possibilities for themselves beyond the classroom and to align themselves with others in order to achieve these goals throughout the process of participation. Hence, the two conceptual frameworks can be linked.
Chapter 5 – Middle Level Students

Hi,

We would like to tell you how we feel in the multi-level class... We find that the work is almost the same for everyone except sometimes the higher levels get more homework. This is sometimes a problem for the lower levels because they don't understand. But sometimes it's too easy for us so we get bored. But that's ok because we like to speak with others so we're happy to help the lower levels. And it's also more free in this class which can help us practice for other things like clubs or helping our friends and family. It's fun to meet new people from other countries too because then we'll know more about other cultures it will be good for us in the future. Our teacher is like a friend and he gives us help. We can go to him for anything we need even if it's not about this class. He especially tries to help the lower levels because they need a lot of time. He tries his best to help everyone though. We feel sorry for the lower levels because we remember how bad we felt so lost, when we came so we really do want to help them because they don't know things. It's good when we can use our language to help. Besides, we get to also practice our speaking and it's good to know new people. Also, we know the material better when we have to explain. Not everyone wants to help them though. Some people get mad at the lower levels because they want to be with their friends or don't want to do group work with them because they speak so bad. This causes problems for the class. The higher levels get bored because they wait and the lower levels get mad because they don't understand. Sometimes we think that the lower levels might not feel so bad if they were in a class just for them. But it's also good that the higher levels can help them so we don't know.

Bye!

Bina and Natalie

(A summary of Bina and Natalie’s responses rewritten by Bina)

Portrait of Bina

Background

Bina is a female from India. She immigrated to Canada at the age of 13. When this research was being conducted, she had been in Canada for 2 years. Before arriving in Canada, she took English courses for 7 years. She lives with her parents, her younger brother and an older female cousin in an apartment. She assists her parents outside of school with translation and orientation and she feels proud of her new role. In addition, she would like to find work in order to help her parents. She is trilingual: Gujarati, Hindi, and English. She is a grade 10 intermediate English language learner (ESL C) in the following courses: Civics and Careers, Science, Business, and GLS (Learning Strategies). Her hobbies occur mainly at school since outside of school she must be with her family. She wears casual clothing with some traditional Indian garb. At school, she is very helpful with her English language learner peers and teachers both in and out of the classroom: she is often the first person to volunteer to assist someone. She is pleased with her roles as “helper” and “leader.” She attends school regularly and has a good grade average. Although her friends are mainly other English language learners who are...
from a variety of cultures, she is eager to be friends with English native speakers. Her co-curricular interests are the Ambassadors’ Club, South Asian Club, and French Club.

**Classroom**

Throughout the semester, Bina sits at the front of the class beside a boy who shares her first language and who is also an intermediate/advanced English language learner. From the first observation to the last, Bina finishes her work quickly and then, chats with friends or helps lower level learners. She is not given any other work to do. She has little interaction with the teacher because he is preoccupied with the lower level students. Often, she chats in her first language with the boy next to her as they work. Mostly, Bina is on-task and does the work that the teacher requests. In fact, if the boy goes off track, Bina asks him to be quiet and to focus on the work. Yet, occasionally, she acts out because she has nothing to do. In the third observation, when Bina has finished her work, she wanders around the classroom and then returns to the boy who shares her first language. She laughs loudly until the teacher requests that she quiet herself and help a lower level student with work. She obeys the teacher by assisting a lower level learner. Also, in the fourth observation, she finishes her work and chats with other intermediate level students and then ends up joking with the boy who sits next to her: she kicks him. The teacher does not notice. Then, the activity changes and she quickly volunteers to lead a game by writing on the board. In the final observations, Bina does her work quietly and when she finishes, she does homework from another class and checks with the lower level students to see if they need assistance. Even when the teacher does not arrive for the class, Bina quietly works on the computer where she finishes an assignment for another class. Hence, her tendency is to be focused in the classroom on whatever the teacher asks her to do and when she finishes that task, she is eager to help others, chat, or do homework. On occasion, she acts out with her friends when she has nothing to do because she has finished her work quickly and has not found anything else to do with her time. Overall, she is self-sufficient and motivated.

**Portrait of Natalie**

**Background**

Natalie is a female from the Ukraine. She came to Canada when she was 15 years old. During this study, she had been in Canada for 1 year. When she arrived, she was forced to repeat her grade 9 year. She studied English for 5 years before immigrating to Canada. She lives in an apartment with her parents, and two younger siblings. She helps her family by working part-
time. She is trilingual: Ukrainian, Russian, and English. She is a grade 11 intermediate ESL C/D English language learner studying Sport and Society, Math, Physics, and GLS (Learning Strategies). Her hobbies include dancing and swimming which occur outside of school. She is casual yet fashionable in her dress. In school, she is mostly talkative and outgoing with her Russian/Ukrainian peer group whereby she is a “helper” for recent arrivals. She still feels confused about the direction for her future. Hence, she is not very interested in her academics, her marks are satisfactory and her attendance sporadic. She is nervous about her integration into Canadian society and therefore she feels hesitant to mix with native speakers. Her co-curricular involvement includes helping newcomers, and belonging to the Russian Club.

Classroom

All semester long Natalie sits at the back of the classroom beside a lower level learner (ESL A). Typically, they speak in Russian and often carry on side conversations while the teacher talks. Throughout the course, Natalie does not start her work once the teacher has given the instructions. Instead, she continues chatting in Russian with the lower level student. At the beginning of the semester, she doodles as she chats and it is only when the teacher approaches her that Natalie announces she will write for herself and the lower level student. It is typical that Natalie does all of the work for the ESL A student beside her as the lower level learner searches through the dictionary. At this time, since they have prolonged starting the task, they are the last pair to finish. Two weeks later, Natalie appears to be more focused. She volunteers to give answers 5 times in a span of 10 minutes. This really highlights how the work comes easily to her. Again, she assists other lower level students in both ESL A and ESL B when called upon by the teacher to act as a translator. When she does this, her lower level partner sits and does nothing. After the first term, Natalie continues to sit with the lower level Russian speaking student. They have become friends. Again, they chat in Russian instead of doing the assigned work. At the last moment, Natalie begins the work just before it is due; it is very easy for her. The ESL A friend has not brought paper and Natalie assumes the responsibility once again to do the work and then passes a piece of paper to the lower level learner who proceeds to copy what Natalie has written. After that, Natalie helps another intermediate level student by using Russian to explain the work. Near the end of the semester, Natalie continues to explain work to her lower level peer. In Russian, she reviews what she has already learned in an English class: the basic eleven-sentence paragraph which is a part of the ESL A and ESL B curriculum. The
course work is clearly repetitive for her, but she has nothing else to do. It is noteworthy that this time Natalie enables the lower level student to work independently. Natalie does her own paragraph quickly and then doodles in Russian. When the activity changes to a game, she and her lower level partner ignore the game and chat in Russian. Close to the end of the semester, when the teacher does not arrive in the classroom, Natalie and her lower level peer do not do school work, but instead they continue to chat in Russian just as they did at the beginning of the semester. Overall, Natalie finds the work simple and therefore she procrastinates. At the last moment, she finishes her work quickly and helps others. The teacher appreciates her support in the classroom and often calls upon her to help. She is relaxed in the class and uses the majority of her time to chat in Russian with the lower level student or to help her with work. Often, this help comes in the form of copying.

*Questionnaire Responses-Middle Level Students*

Out of 53 participants, 6 were ESL C or intermediate level English language learners; however, 4 of those participants did not finish the questionnaire; therefore, only 2 middle level participants completed the questionnaire.

In Table 4, the 21 questions represent the highest weighted-score for all levels in the online questionnaire. The shaded questions indicate the most significant for the middle level participants.

Although the questionnaire responses lack statistical significance due to the low number of participants, it is still interesting to see how Bina and Natalie’s feelings are measured against the questionnaire responses with regard to the multi-level classroom. Comparable answers are highlighted in this chapter.

**Table 4: Online questionnaire responses-middle level participants.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Questionnaire Questions</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, then I do feel welcomed in the school.</td>
<td>16/12/6/2/2</td>
<td>190/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>10/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my participation in the community outside of school in such activities as jobs and clubs.</td>
<td>17/10/4/3/1</td>
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If I get frustrated in classes that have students from different levels of English, I remind myself of how important it is for my future to keep working hard. | 14 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 179 / 4.71 |
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When I am in classes with students from different levels of English, I am able to ask for help from other students. | 7 | 16 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 175 / 4.61 |
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I am happy with my involvement in activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama. | 9 | 11 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 173 / 4.55 |
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When I am doing group-work in classes that have students from different levels of English, I like working with students who are at the same level as I am. | 7 | 20 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 173 / 4.55 |
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In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help me get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama. | 8 | 10 | 14 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 171 / 4.5 |
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Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English. | 9 | 13 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 170 / 4.47 |
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In the classes that have students from all different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help increase my ability to take part in the class. | 11 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 170 / 4.47 |
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When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I feel like I have a lot to offer to teams, or clubs. | 7 | 17 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 167 / 4.39 |
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When there are classes that have students from different levels of English, I am happy that the teacher makes herself available to help everyone. | 8 | 14 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 167 / 4.39 |
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If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, I also do feel welcomed in the community outside of school. | 7 | 15 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 165 / 4.34 |
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In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other. | 9 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 165 / 4.34 |
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When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I see myself as an important member because I work or I am in a club or an organization. | 6 | 13 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 163 / 4.29 |
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When I am in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I do feel welcomed by other students and teachers. | 5 | 16 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 162 / 4.26 |
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Teachers are available to provide me with the time I need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English. | 7 | 15 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 161 / 4.24 |
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Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than other classes. | 10 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 160 / 4.21 |
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If there were extra work to do for multi-level classes, I would volunteer to do it because I know that it is good for my learning. | 3 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 160 / 4.21 |
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I like working with students who have the same level of
This chapter addresses the four main research questions with regard to the intermediate English language learner (ESL C) and briefly shows that the two models may be connected.

*Nature of the ESL students’ overall experience in a multi-level classroom with regard to the multi-level language groupings literature*

This section looks at Bina and Natalie’s experience in a multi-level classroom with reference to their course material, their teacher, and their peers.

*Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their course material in a multi-level classroom*

**Same Work.** When asked about the work being essentially the same for all levels, Bina confirms that the work is similar and this causes pitfalls for the lower level peers at times and frustrates her and the more advanced level students at other times:

> As I said before like A and Bs, they don’t know so like if you help them like teacher explain it to them they will probably know some of the stuff and like ESL C and D probably they and E they know everything, right? (Interview 2)

In several observations notes, Bina finishes her work quickly and does not receive any additional work (Observation 1, 3, 4, 5). In fact, in her journal she exclaims how the work is not challenging: “*In GLS, it’s very easy, because it has student from all ESL level*” (Journal 1). Natalie verifies that the classroom work is the same, but the teacher occasionally varies the quantity of work for different levels:

> … ESL D more harder ahhh… homework for example… yesterday we have work we supposed to write a dialogue for ESL D it’s supposed to be for two pages for example and for ESL A it’s just half a page or like like that. (Interview 1)

However, for the majority of the observations, Natalie frequently volunteers; in Observation 2, she volunteers “5 times within a window of 10 minutes.” In other observations, the work is the same for all students and very easy for her and therefore, she finishes quickly and begins to doodle in Russian (Observation 3, 4). As well, in other observations, she delays beginning the work and can be seen talking to the lower level learner in Russian: “They are not on task for 8
minutes!” (Observation 1). Perhaps, since she finds it so easy, she is in no hurry to begin the task.

In fact, Bina is so concerned that the tests are the same for all levels and that the lower level peers are disadvantaged by this, that she initiates a conversation with her teacher to request that the test be altered for the lower level students. She describes how she has noticed them struggling: “…I saw it. Like we saw it…whenever we have a test or quiz they take, they wants more time because they couldn’t understand and Mr. Orellana has to help them…” (Interview 3). Similarly, Natalie highlights the inability of the lower level learners to do the same course work with a giggle: “No. Like the same work ahhh…if copy yes” (Interview 1). Also, throughout the observations, Natalie’s lower level partner regularly copies Natalie’s work. Balliro (1997) acknowledges the problem that the lower level peers often copy the work of the higher level classmates; however, she cautions that teachers not get angry with students since they may be feeling a “deeply ingrained imperative to work collectively so others do not lose face” (p. 53). This links to the sense of “family” among the English language learners. However, both Bina and Natalie describe the nature of the higher level learners’ experience as not very positive because the work is the same: the work is too easy for the higher level students and they become disruptive. Bina indicates, “Some of the people ya, they do. But like some of the people, therefore easy so they don’t challenge theirselves (Interview 2). Likewise, Natalie explains, “…ESL Ds started talking about something else chatting, because they know for this assignment they spend maybe 1 hour not more” (Interview 2).

**Work is Simple and Slow.** Both Bina and Natalie state that the work is often too simple for them: Bina says, “Sometime, like some of the activities, but the others are like is challenging to do it and go to ready for the regular classes” (Interview 2). In her second journal, Bina comments on the simplicity of the work: “In GLS, it’s so much easy because I only get to learn and participate and present the different material. And sometime I want to learn more…” (Journal 2). Natalie criticizes, “Because sometimes it’s so boring. Like sitting…” (Interview 2) and wishes for more challenging work 65% of the time (Interview 2). As a result, the pace can be very slow as Natalie mentions in the second interview:

Ahhh… sometimes we go very very slowly but sometimes very quickly for example we do some activities of course everybody want to ac activity there just do something but if we like supposed to reading everyone just do what ever they want and it’s going very very slowly. (Interview 2)
Yoshida (1998) shows that often students would prefer opportunities to give input on course work or “a certain amount of freedom to design or select one’s own assignments.” (p. 3). Perhaps, this would help the teacher avoid providing too simplistic work. On a similar note, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) suggest that teachers provide “self-access materials” which allow students to “select materials and work individually… and each task should be set up so that learners need minimal, if any, assistance from the teacher…” (p. 3). Hess (2001) and Shank and Terrill (1995) also promote that educators supply materials that students can access on their own in order to promote students taking responsibility for their work instead of feeling frustrated that their needs are not being addressed.

**Preference for Speaking in Groups.** Regardless, the students also focus on the positive elements of their work: they can finish their work independently; after that, they can chat with a friend or help another student. They value the opportunity to practice their oral communication. Bina is delighted to help others: “I feel good like excited because it’s easy and you get to do it by yourself and you can help after you finish your assignments or your activity” (Interview 2). Similarly, although Natalie is bored, she is happy to support her peers: “Ya bored wi with the work. Ahhh… sometimes I don’t know… it’s I don’t know, bad? Nothing. You help them. What’s bad? (Interview 2). Equally, she is content to chat:

Ahhh… sometimes it’s not so not boring but sometimes we don’t… like you told we we do the work but we can do it for 5 or 10 minutes but we like the teacher doing the 20, 25 minutes and he I done this work for 5, 10 minutes and then I sitting and chatting because I don’t want to, don’t know what else to do. (Interview 2)

Like Archie, they too very much appreciate opportunities to engage in a variety of speaking activities; they see these as opportunities for practicing as beneficial in helping them to communicate with native speakers in future classes, and engaging in activities in and out of school. Bina stresses that she enjoys this focus: “…if you have ahhh… something that you can do with the better communication more like more about the communication how you say how you communicate more… (Interview 3); likewise, Natalie explains,

Ya of course. You more free in GLS class then in other class be more free… For example if you in ahhh… GLS classroom more free speaking you start to speak speak speak then in a clubs you maybe team leader or something like that because you don’t say anything. (Interview 2)
Moreover, they so desire to engage in conversation that they prefer to be in a multi-level class, where they are occasionally bored by the work. This is because they see this environment, where they feel “free” to express themselves, as conducive to their ability to better communicate in the future. Bina describes the multi-level classroom: “Because like it’s kind of free… (Interview 3); Natalie expresses how much she values the freedom she feels in the multi-level classroom:

Ya, I think so because when I speak I free maybe with of course with mistakes many mistakes and somebody don’t understand me but I’m try to explain how I can. They understand me. They understand what I not so perfect English just now but in the future I hope so very good… Of course it’s boring in GLS but then … start start to like there with speak speak speak and read speak write and then I understand it’s more help us. (Interview 3)

In addition, similar to Archie, both Bina and Natalie value their group work activities. For instance, they see their participation in group activities in the classroom as opportunities for helping them to participate in school clubs or sports. Often, they work with people who are not from their close network of friends and this gives them confidence to mix with new people in the school community: “Because if I do my assignments in the club then I would like to get into my clubs too. So I can like get to other people and talk about my opinions and other stuff that I want to I have an it’s my opinion that I can talk about that” (Interview 3). Natalie too mentions that projects which require her to work with new people really prepare her for working with new people in co-curricular activities (Interview 2). Another benefit of their group activities is that they develop leadership skills which they see as being useful for leading others outside of the classroom such as newcomers. Bina describes how she has developed her leadership skills: “Probably when you have to like if your relatives or other friends they’re new and they want to go somewhere then we can like get to group and then we can go whatever like other people wants to go” (Interview 3). Also, Natalie explains how her leadership in the multi-level classroom is transferred to the community: “…It’s your place you you understand that you some somebody here. Somebody somebody here nee ahhh… need you like outside of school I have friends who need me…” (Interview 3). Finally, they appreciate group activities for the knowledge they gain about working with students from diverse backgrounds; they predict that this will help them integrate into a multicultural society such as Canada. Bina states, “If you know different cultures than you can like understand the other culture. So you can like the other
people can do respect your culture (Interview 3). Similarly, Natalie highlights, “I’m studying every time how to to com communicate it with ahhh… with people from other countries. Maybe sometimes I’m learn the cul culture and I meet new pe people. In the future I think it’s help me” (Interview 2). As well, she stresses that this will help her integrate more into Canadian society:

Ya, of course. You know more about country, you know about other cultures. For example, whether you talk with your friends about something and you started for example, talking about Israel a culture. You know about that you can explain him something, it help in the life I don’t know. (Interview 2)

Also, in the questionnaire, the middle level participants mostly agree that multi-level classes are enjoyable because they often engage in group work activities where the group members are from diverse backgrounds.

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their teacher in a multi-level classroom

Teacher is a Friend. When Bina and Natalie consider their ESL teacher, they highlight that he is a friend with whom they feel confidence because they feel understood by him. Bina is outspoken about her feelings of friendship for her ESL teacher: “I would be explaining my relationship between the the teacher as my friends because I would go and ask them for help and all the thing that I don’t know. And it’s easy to go and ask teacher…” (Interview 1). She also positively remarks on her teacher in her journal: “My experience with the teacher is good because the teachers are so nice, friendly, and helpful. When ever I want to them to ask any questions they will help me to understand” (Journal 2). In fact, they feel that their struggle to learn English and integrate is well understood by their ESL teacher. Both Bina and Natalie see their teacher as an important resource for their ability to visualize themselves as successful language learners in the future. Natalie comments on feeling understood by her teacher, “…In ESL I’m with teachers teachers who are good always with understand us” (Interview 1) because the ESL teacher reassures her: “Ahhh… OK, for example, when I came to Canada…I don’t understand or can’t speak because I’m so shy, but you like I don’t know make me free a little bit when I came you just ‘Don’t worry. It’s gonna to be OK’” (Interview 2). This reassurance helps Natalie to feel more confident: “…you give me like I don’t know maybe hope that I will be in the future I will know my English better…” (Interview 3).

This feeling of being understood leads them to confidently approach their ESL teacher with concerns both within and beyond the ESL classroom. Bina states how she easily approaches her ESL teacher: “I would like you would ask ahhh… I would like to ask teacher
more questions and extra help” (Interview 1). Not only does she approach him for herself, but she also confidently approaches him out of concern for others. She requests that the ESL teacher provide different forms of evaluation for the lower level students because she sees them struggling: “Ya, we talked to him and he said he may do it, he may do the different quiz but some time the some of the example like the test it’s like true or false so it’s easy for to do it ESL A and B. Right so that’s what he…” (Interview 3). Bina also prefers to approach her ESL teacher over her friends when she has concerns which go beyond the curriculum: “No, I rather go ask first teacher and then ask my friend after” (Interview 1). Similarly, Natalie feels this rapport with her ESL teachers both for curricular and non-curricular needs: “… Then teacher understand you and then help you like you… I’m not now with you in any classes but you help me right… I know that if I if I have some problems I can can come to you, Mr. Orellana, the same…” (Interview 2). She mentions this again in her journal:

Teachers very nice. Most teacher who understand you (How do you feel) very nice to me, always help me with difficult in any subject...They always ready to help us in any situations. It’s nice, because not all teachers understand our situation. We are new students, we don’t know many rolls, and religion of Canada. (Journal 1)

**Individual Attention.** Bina and Natalie equally note that this support also tends to be in the form of the ESL teacher approaching the students to provide individual attention: the ESL teacher “checks in” with students according to Bina (Interview 2). Furthermore, they indicate that the ESL teacher tends to spend more time with each student than other teachers. Bina says, “…Mr. Orellana come to us and ask me or my other classes other students” (Interview 3). In her journal, she also describes this individual attention: “Our teacher is explain us more using easy words...” (Journal 1). Also, she appreciates this support: “… the entire teacher helped me all the time, whenever I need it. And I wish I get the entire teacher like I have it right now in future too” (Journal 1). Likewise, Natalie describes how the teacher gives attention to individual students through not only speaking to students, but also checking their nonverbal communication:

…In ESL class, he spend more time for explain the words, he spend more time to explain us wi in this for example, test we talking about what what the main main idea. … if it be ESL st ahhh… te teacher who understand us I think so he maybe spend more time to see for our face that we understand. (Interview 2)
Both Bina and Natalie recognize that they occasionally need this individual attention although they try to be more independent than the lower level peers. When Bina is asked if she is comfortable doing work without assistance, she states, “No, because I would go and in instead of doing I’ll go by alone solving the problem alone because it’s to go to teacher so that can they they can help you more of that” (Interview 1). In addition, Natalie describes how she still depends on assistance from the teacher although she attempts to solve her own problems: “Ahhh… like we supposed to see how what’s the situation if it’s so like if I can’t do ahhh… speak with my friends or teacher of course I go t t to them to ask ahhh… them for help but it’s sometimes not so like big problem I can do it alone” (Interview 1). Bina and Natalie highlight that this teacher assistance is especially necessary for those students who are new to Canada or the lower level learners. Bina describes her feelings:

Like probably the ESL students because the ESL student is new and… Probably all of them because almost as ummm… ESL A to D or C because they probably know that much as because some of the words and words is new for ESL student and they got difficult to understand them that so. (Interview 1)

Natalie gives suggestions:

Mr. Orellana’s supposed to give more attention for ESL A because they just don’t understand what what’s what’s happening in the class. ESL D ehhh… B it’s more like not so ummm… many atten ummm… Mr. Orellana doesn’t give them many attention because you know he know understand we understand better what’s happening in the class but it’s not so bad because we can help other students. (Interview 1)

Natalie explains that the ESL teacher especially must spend the time with the lower level peers because they need hope that they will integrate into Canadian society:

Ahhh… like hope ahhh… they help them and ahhh… like they know they ahhh… they somebody needs them like at school they not alone they come to school and teachers ask them, ‘How are you? How your…’ For example, ‘your sports?’ Or something else, ‘How’s your family?’ I don’t know. ‘Are you…’ ‘How your other classes?’ ‘If you need some help?’ And they have a whole like, they know that somebody needs them at school. Not just their friends. But their teachers too. Then, that’s what I all was needed when I come just come here. And you give me that. I know that I come to school and you were here and so many problems I come to you or Mr. Orellana and somebody help me. Because not always parents help me at school and some from other subjects. (Interview 3)

In fact, Natalie highlights that the ESL teacher spends the majority of his time moving around to support the lower level learners with individual attention: “75, 80% of class” (Interview 2).
Moreover, in Observation 1, Bina had no contact with the teacher during the classroom because he focused on the lower level students only. A consequence of this individual support for lower level learners is that often others are not engaged. When this occurs, they frequently will act out which causes classroom management issues for the teacher. Bina concurs that often all levels can be disruptive either due to their frustration of not understanding, or to their boredom of being finished quickly, “Yes, I seen some of the people like they do whenever Mr. Orellana said not to go to computer but they go to computer. They don’t respect the teacher” (Interview 2). Even she has shown disruptive behaviour during Observation 3 and 4: “She is done very quickly compared to the lower levels. She wanders the classroom. She begins to chat with the boy from her home country. She is laughing loudly and is asked to be quiet by the teacher. She is then directed to help an ESL A student” (Observation 3). Maddalena (2002) highlights the dilemma of paying too much attention to the lower level students at the risk of “boring the more advanced learners…” (p. 2). Since classroom management issues do arise, often the teacher calls on the middle or higher level learners to assist the lower level peers so that they do not get distracted. This gives these students have an activity to do when they are finished their work ahead of their lower level classmates:

… I help help new student. I help teacher sometimes. But he ask me for ahhh… help because h sh ahhh… all of all of GLS is grade 10 I hope so. Grade 10 and they like like little chat just a little cause ahhh… they just screaming, cr ahhh… running in the classroom, do don’t listen to teacher and Mr. O’ Brien, “Just please help me with them!” I just going to like for example, who un un understand Russian, explain, “Just sit please. Sit quiet, please!” Then, ahhh… sometimes I’m sitting near them, “Just please sit quiet OK.” Then, OK, OK. (Interview 1)

Maddalena (2002) also highlights how the teacher often calls on more advanced students for support: “…I will propose that advanced learners are a valuable resource who may serve as teaching assistants…” (p. 2).

**Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their peers in a multi-level classroom**

**Empathy for Peers.** When examining Bina and Natalie’s relationship with their peers, it is clear that they feel empathetic toward the lower level learners since they can recall their experiences as lower level students. Bina comments on her empathy: “I don’t want like other people… I know how it feel when you don’t understand and you don’t know anything so that’s why I know how to how does it feel so I don’t want the other people to feel like that. Like alone and st all that. So, that’s why” (Interview 2). Furthermore, she remembers how a higher
level helped her: “Ahhh… I had a friend she’s she speak the same language as me and she help me with my so many projects and assignments with it so I got better in it” (Interview 3). Natalie too recalls her difficulties: “…I know my first day was like you I’m crying for example, I was so lost…” (Interview 1). She clearly recollects the support she received and because of that, she feels obligated to help newcomers:

Mmmm… what else like when it’s come a new student of course you you you supposed to help I supp I help them and I feel myself I’m I’m so proud of myself ‘Oh, I help them!’ because I know when I come to school many students helped me, many teachers helped me, you helped me and if I don’t have this like your help I think I wa was lost for now like I was so lost. And what else… (Interview 1)

Bina describes that it is typical that many higher level students feel this same empathy toward lower level students: “Ahhh… they feel probably happy or bad because ummm… they feel that sometime they feel bad because they think inside of their heart they were before they were in ESL A and B so they know how they feel” (Interview 1). Overall, she believes that the higher level learners support their lower level classmates a high percentage of time in the classroom: “Probably 40, around 40 or 50 (Interview 2). Bina summarizes her feelings in a journal:

For the helping other participation is high because I like to help other student especially ESL student because I get to know other student from the different country and I know how you feel on your first day of school also I like to take them and show where their class room and show the school so they wont be affered of people or they won’t be scared to go to the class late. So for that I like to help others. (Journal 1)

Natalie too highlights there is a special bond among English language learners because many have experienced the challenges of being a newcomer at a lower level: “…because ESL student understand you you feel when you come to they are are like for example, they in Canada mmm… 1 year and you just came it’s diff ohhh…” (Interview 1). Like Bina, she sees how the higher level learners care for their lower level peers:

Mmmm… I think mos most of the ESL students ESL E ahhh… very care about care about ESL A because they kn ow how it’s be in ESL A don’t understand anything at school and what’s happen at school any ahhh… any I don’t know holidays or something like that. They don’t understand ahhh… some activities they can help you they translate to you they… I think it’s better. It’s good. (Interview 1)

In her first journal, she reiterates how she was helped by the higher level students: “All that classes was ESL classes. I was like them, because all student immigrant like me, they help me
and understand myself.” (Journal 1). Maddalena (2002) concurs that multi-level classroom harmony is created through supportive peers:

… achieved in groups of motivated students who seek successful integration based on a willingness to participate or cooperate and not on ability alone. When advanced level students are eager to act as a bridge to help facilitate the learning process it is equally important that their lower level classmates exhibit a willingness to cross that bridge (p. 8).

According to Bina and Natalie, another positive aspect about being around other English language learners is that they feel relaxed and free to speak because their peers typically understand their challenges. Bina explains her sense of security:

Because it, GLS, ahhh… I got more confident because the people are all the same as me all the ESL people so ya. In the regular classes, like all the different kind of people are not ESL student. So… ya… Because the people they all ummm… ESL students, right. And they almost as same level that as me some of the people. And some of the higher level but it’s OK. (Interview 2)

Natalie also discusses that when she is among English language learners, she feels “free” to express herself because they share a common experience with language learning: “Ya, I think so because when I speak I free maybe with of course with mistakes many mistakes and somebody don’t understand me but I’m try to explain how I can. They understand me. They understand what I not so perfect English just now but in the future I hope so very good…” (Interview 3). She returns to this point where she highlights that in the multi-level classroom she has a sense of belonging:

Ahhh… maybe when you like you feel in yourself I don’t know how to I know how to say it in Russian like you feel in your place. It’s your place you you understand that you some somebody here. Somebody somebody here nee ahhh… need you like outside of school I have friends who need me, I need them and I’m OK there like I maybe making mistakes somebody with somebody but they need me and I feel myself free I can say whatever I like whatever I want. (Interview 3)

She mentions this secure feeling again in a journal entry: “…now also I have classes when I feel alone myself, but I know than I have friend who waiting for me” (Journal 1). This sense of belonging is recognized by both Bina and Natalie as being parallel to having a family relationship whereby their close friends are mainly other English language learners. Bina indicates, “Ya. Most ESL. I have most ESL friends” (Interview 2). Bina describes that like a family member, she wishes to protect the lower level students from alienation: “Alone. Ya.
Having no friends in like the same language (Interview 3). Moreover, both Bina and Natalie see the support from their ESL family in regular classrooms and in the community. Bina describes how she helps: “No, it’s all ahhh… other classes. Like even the regular classes. If I know it, then I they can ask come and ask me. If I know it then I can help. If I don’t then I don’t know” (Interview 3). She explains that she too is helped in regular classes by more advanced English language learners: “Because like they’re always helping. They’re always like if you’re in trouble or like everything they can help you with it…” (Interview 3). She also mentions this support in her journals: “My Experiences with my peers were good. Because they help me too” (Journal 1). Similarly, Natalie describes how they support each other in many circumstances both in and out of school:

Ya. It’s more family… We help each other. Like if I’m a little busy sometimes I’ll worry about somebody we worry about each other especially when we in ESL to the others when we outside together… We help each other in school for example, he make the project last year then he be ahhh… he give me I change it and I can give, right? And outside we help each other the same. We going outside somewhere we help wi with classes we help with English. This help very well. (Interview 2)

In her first journal, Natalie highlights that she feels a part of the ESL family:

It was hard, new country, new school, new people and was in English, it was horrible. But times going and now I know that I have best friend, boyfriend, I know that here people that important for me and I important for them. That here many people who care about me and I care about them like about my family. (Journal 1)

In fact, not only does this family relationship go beyond the multi-level ESL classroom into regular classrooms, but it is often maintained even when the more advanced students have progressed into all regular classes; Bina describes that they continue to explain work or give advice to the lower level peers: “Because like they are ESL but they’re higher level from me but still I can talk with them as like if I with them if I was with them then I won’t be like feeling like that I don’t have other friend. Like I won’t missing my friends from that country” (Interview 3). Likewise, Natalie reports how her friends who are no longer in ESL classes still support her in regular classes. Sometimes they translate the questions from English through two other languages so that she is able to understand: “Wow, that’s a train. Isn’t it? Hebrew, Russian, and to you!” (Interview 2). Also, Mangan-Lev (1997) highlight that through developing a tight-knit group first, cooperative learning naturally follows: “An important first step in facilitating cooperative learning is to provide on-going and ample opportunities for learner’s to interact,
learn about each other and become a community” (p. 35). In addition, Streck (1997) emphasizes the importance of group unity: “I truly believe that students learn best when they know themselves to be part of a community of learners” (p. 41). Hess (2001) too mentions this point: “Students can learn as much by finding out about another… and the immediate interest that such personal contact engenders creates a positive classroom climate that promotes genuine language learning” (p. 3). Bell (1991) also explains, “many students do in fact prefer mixed-level classes, generally because they have friends or relatives who are also interested in learning English, and they want to be assured of being in the same class” (p. 9). Valentic (2005) stresses the value creating a caring environment: “In a multilevel class we can establish a work climate which encourages students to help one another. Better students will help their peers, and shy students will ask for help” (p. 2).

Cooperative Learning. Given this group cohesion, it is not surprising that cooperative learning is a main focal point for both Bina and Natalie in the multi-level classroom. When Bina is asked about her interaction with peers, she immediately comments on how she supports them: “I would helping my friends and explain them if they don’t understand the questions” (Interview 1). In fact, she is happy to engage in this support: “My feeling in GLS class would be mmm… excited because I got to like help people when when you don’t understand and who don’t speak that much English English so ya I feel” (Interview 2). Similarly, when speaking about her involvement in co-curricular activities, Natalie feels that cooperative learning is a main focal point of her school life: “Mmmm… I go in ahhh… dance ahhh… dance classes. Then, ahhh… I help new student in the school” (Interview 1). Again, when discussing her feelings about her course material, Natalie lists cooperative learning as a key component: Ahhh… like course material I I will study ummm… also help ahhh… new student who can’t speak English so like not ummm… not access of good English I translate” (Interview 1). Finally, when she responds to a question about her overall feelings in a multi-level classroom, she stresses again her key role as a mentor for the lower level learners: “OK. If they ahhh… if they speak Russian of course I I help to them because I understand their feelings like me. OK and if not like they don’t Russian or Ukrainian no matter I also help to like… I don’t know helping them with all… help them to with teacher with cl with class with ahhh… homework or something like that” (Interview 1). When asked about the percentage of time which she spends supporting lower level classmates, she lists the majority of the class time:
Ahhh… maybe 80% of I’m translating for for example… she is in ESL A. She half of more than half she didn’t understand and I translate all of them and almost of work what we supposed to do be in a gr do do in a group do in a group ahhh… I do by myself. Then, I explain her and she like understand that one. (Interview 2).

Merson (1997) emphasizes that the more advanced students often notice someone struggling and offer to help; they often act as a support for the teacher (p. 49). In addition, Bell (1991) comments, “Students will develop a group identity more quickly if the teacher can relinquish the traditional ‘leader of the class’ role and instead adopt that of advisor and facilitator… It does mean, though, that students will often be called on to play the role of teacher, that much more work will be done in groups with students organizing their own leadership roles…” (p. 71).

As a matter of fact, both Bina and Natalie monitor the lower level students in the classroom and work in conjunction with Mr. Orellana. Bina notices that tests are too difficult for the lower level peers and requests that he alter them. Bina also attempts to keep others quiet when they should be focusing on the teacher (Observation 2). Natalie describes how she reads lower level learners’ faces when they are confused or she responds to Mr. Orellana’s requests for classroom support:

Ahhh… sometimes I come to them because I saw for their face they don’t understand what’s going on…. sometimes Mr. Orellana ask me to explain them. Sometimes I come to them… because she’s sitting like ‘Oh, my God. What’s he talking about? Sometimes she come to me, ‘Please, explain. Please help me to write. I’m writing but you tell me a little difference what to do.’ (Interview 3)

Both women acknowledge that they too gain happiness from cooperative learning in the sense that they feel good about helping others. For instance, Bina enjoys supporting others to the degree that she belongs to a club that welcomes new students. Natalie gains happiness because she recalls her first days and wants to help others as she was helped when she arrived. Similarly, Maddalena (2002) shows that more advanced students feel happy about their roles as mentors: “…the higher level students were experiencing, ‘a more level of responsibility in the class… we must try to be good teachers…” (p. 6). Another benefit for Bina is that by helping others, she knows her work better: “I don’t know like if you if they don’t understand then if you help them they will it will help you to get to know more about that like it will you start studying in your mind for your test or so you get more about more to more about to know that” (Interview 2).

Hess (2001) too stresses that students will know the material better if they have to teach it: “More able students come to understand that they will learn a great deal themselves by
explaining something to a less able student and by listening patiently while other students make their contributions” (p. 11). Likewise, Natalie notes several benefits when she helps others including practicing both her speaking and writing: “...But if he’s from GLS, maybe more speak English writing some essays or helping him for literacy test. Helping too because I help I write by myself ...practice more and more” (Interview 3). Similarly, Maddalena (2002) indicates that more advanced students list practicing their speaking as one advantage of helping the lower level classmates: “To help teaching English is a good lesson for my speaking...” (p. 5). Likewise, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) state, “advanced learners benefit by using their English skills to help lower level students negotiate meaning” (p. 1). As well, Hess (2001) notes that higher level students will improve their language through explanations to lower level learners: “…cross-ability grouping allows the more able learners to improve their language skills by honing their ability to explain, to state clearly, and to give effective examples...” (p. 3). Another benefit for Natalie is that she recognizes how the multi-level class encourages her to communicate with people from a variety of cultures which she acknowledges as an important aspect of her future in Canada: “I’m studying every time how to communicate it with ahhh... with people from other countries. Maybe sometimes I’m learn the culture and I meet new people. In the future I think it’s help me” (Interview 2). The intermediate language learners in the questionnaire also strongly agree that they appreciate mixing with different cultures in the multi-level classroom. Bell (1991) confirms the skill set in a multi-level class: “…students can bring stories, insights, and skills from all sorts of different backgrounds” (p. 18).

**Use of First Language.** Both Bina and Natalie recognize the importance of using a first or shared language as a tool for cooperative learning. Bina describes that although she always appreciates help in the classroom from her classmates, she still has felt embarrassed when she has no one who can explain something in her first language:

Ummm... I would be feel that little bit embarrassed because there is no people that can speak as my language and if I were I wouldn’t understand I would ask people that I think that that speak as the same language as me. But still I can feel good every people as I know in my class they help me and they like explain it to me ya. (Interview 1)

She describes how the lower level students or teachers often actively search for someone who shares the lower level peers’ first language: “Some of some of the A and B people ac ask whoever their their like their speak as their language and some of their ask teachers or some of their ask ahhh… students” (Interview 2). Moreover, she mentions that when she does not share a
first language, she tries to understand the lower level students through their body language: “I feel happy to work with them because ummm… they’re so like they don’t even know what to say and you can help them as by body language...” (Interview 1). In a classroom observation, Bina can be seen using her first language with a fellow classmate as a tool for their work (Observation 2). Likewise, Natalie acknowledges the value in using a first language for cooperative learning, but she also cautions that it should be used judiciously: “Ummm… ya if it’s a multi-level for example, just two Russians they they can help each other but not if help Russian and help other because like we started to speak Ru just Russian nobody really listens to teacher just Russian, Russian, Russian, it’s too bad” (Interview 1). Throughout all of the observations, Natalie can be seen using a shared language with a lower level student who needs assistance with the work. In fact, during Observation 2, Mr. Orellana calls on her to translate for the Russian speakers who are in the lower levels. She stresses how difficult cooperative learning is without using a first language: “…what I’m think about this then they help me to translate. That’s like better but… sometimes uncomfortable because you when people don’t speak Russian, and you don’t know how to express what you mean like that it’s very hard” (Interview 3). In fact, she describes the degree of frustration that can be felt if she uses English only and a first language is not used as a cooperative learning tool:

From one side it’s good because you started to knew new people from other countries and of course culture or something like that ahhh… but sometimes you want I don’t know like for me ehhh… you need maybe in class for multiculure you need just maybe one person who speak Russian for you just like sometimes we hate this English, we want to speak in Russian or Ukrainian it doesn’t matter… (Interview 3)

Maddalena (2002) stresses too that “when the advanced level students use their L1 in the class to explain or to clarify, their overall effect on the group is one of consolidation, facilitating the creation of an alliance between the two groups” (p. 7). Also, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) promote the use of first language as a teaching tool: “…teachers may ask one student to help another student who speaks the same language so that students can negotiate meaning…” (p. 2).

Role Models. Both Bina and Natalie recognize not only the value of their support for the lower level classmates, but they also highlight the importance of how they represent images of the people who the lower level students can become: they are role models. Bina remembers how important it is to encourage the lower level learners when they look up to them: “They feel
like they can’t speak as their ESL E students speak, but if you like help them, remind them that you can sp spea
k and it would feel good” (Interview 1). She feels that even the higher level students serve as role models for her. In fact, she appreciates when they compliment her:
“Sometimes I feel bad because sometimes I think that I don’t speak as well as ESL E but after that when people said to me like ESL E students said to me that you speak much better than ESL C and stuff students so I feel good” (Interview 1). In addition, Natalie explains how she is a guide for teaching the routines to the less advanced students: “OK. Ya, of course, if it’s if I be in ESL A, of course, I’ll be a leader. Because I’m just help them I know what don’t… do that. Don’t do that. I’m just like, ‘of course I know better than you’ (The participant laughs)” (Interview 1).

**Higher Level Students Frustrated.** Although both Bina and Natalie see cooperative learning as a positive experience, they admit that there are a few moments of tension among the levels. For instance, Bina states that some of the higher level students are not empathetic with the lower level peers: “Probably some people will act the same way that I said it, they feel bad. But some of them probably don’t” (Interview 2). She also notes that some higher level peers will actually refuse to help: “Like they won’t react bad but like they will say no because sometime they want to go with their their friends to do something and they don’t want to help people so that’s why” (Interview 3). Natalie too mentions that some higher level learners are impatient with lower level students:

…For example, ESL E I know they speak English free. And sometimes when for example setting the groups for people ESL E for example D and B, sometimes just just talking about something then ESL B I think you for example speaking ESL B just like sit standing and just listening because he know then he speak they just looking at him like oh… “You you speak so bad just better stand here quiet”, but not all student like that. (Interview 1)

She has even seen higher level students being impolite to the lower level learners:

Mmmm… maybe activities and maybe ahhh… some some student. Ahhh… like because all of them I don’t like all of them it’s not so like each other no… if if there’s a person who like he leader he can like I don’t know ahhh… how it’s called? To don’t care about the people he can ru maybe will will be rude with them or something like that… (Interview 1)

Both Bina and Natalie note that a consequence of this tension is that students become unruly and the teacher is faced with classroom management challenges. For instance, Bina comments on
how students do not pay attention to the teacher because the ESL Es are frustrated by the slow pace and begin to talk or play on the computer:

They will be talking to other people or they will be doing their other works. Or they will be playing on the computers… Because oh when we had to we were learning lesson and everybody’s talking the other people and then Mr. Orellana get so mad at them and then they she’s like ummm… if you guys gonna talk again then you guys I’m gonna send you to the office. So everybody’s now like paying attention in every single class listen lesson. (Interview 3)

Similarly, Natalie describes how the higher level students feel frustrated when they have to wait for the lower level peers:

OK. If we for example reading something and Mr. Orellana gives it more reading for us than for them because of course he understands and they like they’re hard to for them… but it’s good for them and sometimes you know we doing more an more faster work than them. And they like we see you we finished we already done we just sitting we don’t know what to do we don’t know what to do at all and we have for example 1 hour to finish the class and they just starting to do something. Maybe that’s better, bad like that. (Interview 3)

As one of the downfalls of a multi-level class, Maddalena (2002) lists the class goes at a slow pace for intermediate-advanced students: “…the class sometimes had to move slowly when things were explained to the lower level students…” (p. 5). Similarly, Hess (2001) cautions about the pace of the activities:

doing an activity too fast or too slowly can ruin the process. This is particularly important in the large multi-level class because without correct pacing, we can lose control and make our students either bored or frustrated, and in a large multi-level class such students become troublemakers and distract even the most fastidious and most motivated. (p. 9)

**Lower Levels Students Discontent.** Not only do the higher level learners feel tension, but also the lower level students are frustrated for a variety of reasons. For example, Bina says that the lower level learners often feel envious of their higher level peers:

Because how would they feel sometimes sad because ummm… they don’t know and always they like different and they are totally cannot some of the people cannot speak and some people can so they feel sometimes sad… Ummm… they probably feel little B and A probably the they feel bad looking at ESL E. (Interview 1)

Even Natalie feels this envy when she sees a more advanced student: “She’s level E, but when she near me especial first the time, I know she speak English very good ahhh… then I don’t want to speak English I just sitting a long way, ‘OK, it’s fine’” (Interview 2). Moreover, she confirms
that the lower level students feel inferior to their higher level classmates: Ahhh… sometimes just feel stupid because they why they understand English so bad…” (Interview 1). In fact, she says that they often prefer to be silent around the higher level learners: “…for person who who from ESL A if his time will would be he will shy like sitting in a class and don’t do anything don’t ask any questions just sitting ‘Oh, and like I pass it I pass it’ ” (Interview 3). Pham Phu (2007) stresses that one disadvantage of being in a multi-level classroom is the less advanced students may suffer: “students of lower level may feel threatened, left out, and frustrated” (p. 308).

**Homogeneous Grouping.** Therefore, given this tension both Bina and Natalie occasionally feel that, at times, a more homogeneous class might benefit the students. Bina clearly states one benefit of the multi-level class is that often students from different cultures mix, but she recognizes that this mixing of cultures could also happen in a more homogeneous language ability level classroom (Interview 2). Likewise, Natalie acknowledges that the lower level students will be less intimidated in a more homogeneous setting: “(The participant laughs.) I think maybe separate. Maybe, then she will try to speak and she not be so shy” (Interview 2). Bell (1991) also states this as a concern in a multi-level classroom: “Lower-level students may feel intimidated by the competition and may not make the same effort that they would in a more homogeneous classroom” (p. 12). Regardless, Natalie sees that the cooperative learning which occurs in the multi-level classroom is still important so in the end, she is undecided whether the multi-level or the homogeneous level is preferable:

…Sometimes, I don’t know what side it’s look like. If you look at one side, it’s good because if she will just be with ESL A, B, C then she ahh… wouldn’t so shy she just free herself and be maybe try to speak. When it’s ahh… but without ahh… D, E ESL E, D she ahh… nobody helps people maybe I don’t know. (Interview 2)

Likewise, Yoshida (1998) lists having a “division of students according to skill level” (p. 3) as feature to include in an ESP program. Hoffer and Larson (1997) also underscore grouping by skill level: “Grouping people by skill levels may be preferable in certain circumstances” (p. 4).

**Nature of ESL students’ participation in a multi-level classroom**

This section highlights factors which enhance and limit Bina and Natalie’s ability to feel a sense of belonging in a community of practice.

**Factors which enhance students’ ability to belong to a community of practice**

**Peers/Self.** When considering their responses to the questions based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) “legitimate peripheral participation” conceptual framework, generally, both
Bina and Natalie feel pleased with their participation in a multi-level classroom. They can make many connections between what they experience in the multi-level classroom with their lives in school and in the community. However, Bina admits that occasionally she has negative moments: “Ummm… sometimes I feel happy sometime I don’t… Probably 4 or 5” (Interview 1). Natalie exclaims that she enjoys participating in the multi-level class because she feels less intimidated by having lower level learners around her: “Multi-level it’s mixed? I think it’s gonna be f f maybe 5 because it’s more better like when we mixed” (Interview 1). Bina also states that she is confident in her participation because she sees her peers as the same as her: “Because the people they all ummm… ESL students, right. And they almost as same level that as me some of the people. And some of the higher level but it’s OK” (Interview 2). Likewise, Natalie stresses these very same feelings in her journal: “In classes like GLS, I answear the questin I don’t sceared to speak. If I speak with misteiks I know that none loufing from me because they know that I speak not so good” (Journal 1). In the questionnaire, middle level students indicate that they feel welcomed by their peers and teachers in multi-level classrooms.

Both women feel positively about their involvement in co-curricular activities with English language learners or other immigrants. When rating it on a scale of 1 to 6, Bina responds, “I think I got to do on that is ummm… probably 6 or 5” (Interview 1). Likewise, Natalie states, “I think maybe 5 or 4…” (Interview 1). Here, it is noteworthy that Bina and Natalie equate this sense of happiness in co-curricular activities as dependent on their degree of self-confidence. Moreover, they reference themselves and their peers in the multi-level classroom as key factors in boosting their self-esteem which enables them to participate in co-curricular activities with other English language learners. Bina explains this point:

Mmmm… I feel confident yourself also as ummm… your friends because they can speak as your language same as your language…Ya. And also, the other people can help like because they are the same as the ESLs as you are ESL so…” (Interview 1)

Furthermore, in the questionnaire, the middle level participants strongly agree with the link between feeling welcomed in the multi-level classroom by their peers and teacher, and being happy in the school.

On a similar note, Natalie cites her happiness in the community is based on her socialization with her tight network of friends: “… because I have half half of my friends speak Russian. I just feel more better…” (Interview 1). In addition, in the questionnaire, middle level
participants also indicate that there is also a link between their happiness with their peer group and teacher in the multi-level classroom, and their happiness in the community.

Cooperative Learning/Self. Bina says she enjoys participating in the multi-level classroom because she gets to help these other students; this helps her to feel more connected to others (Interview 3). In her second journal, she mentions her participation is high because she enjoys the responsibility of mentoring the lower level classmates: “For the participation in helping tother is high because I like to help other student especially ESL student because I know when your are new in the school how do you feel. Also I like to meet new people (student) and take then and show the school, classes etc…” (Journal 2). Natalie cites in her first journal that she participates well because she is able to help others and she feels comfortable with her speaking:

I think it high. In ESL classes I help my friend. For example: To our school came new girls... She is Russian. She in ESL A. I understand her how is she feel herself in classes when all classes in English. I helped her in English I explain material in Russian and help translation from Russian to English her answears. In classes like GLS, I answear the questin I don’t sceared to speak. If I speak with misteiks I know that none loufing from me because they know that I speak not so good. (Journal 1)

In addition, she emphasizes the value of using a first language as a support tool in cooperative learning. These comments reflect what Wenger (1998) calls for in the infrastructure of educational engagement: participants develop shared practices and a long-term commitment to their enterprise and each other (p. 272).

Moreover, through their peer mentoring, they have created new roles for themselves which help them to feel a sense of purpose and to practice their speaking which they will need in future endeavours. Furthermore, they imagine the struggles of the lower level peers since they have been at that lower level and can easily recall their own challenges: “Educational imagination is about locating ourselves – getting a panoramic view of the landscape and of our place in it” (p. 272). Moreover, they wish to align themselves with their lower level classmates in their shared struggle to improved language proficiency: they show that they involve themselves in “the processes of coordination by which various contributors converge on a joint goal” (p. 274).

Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self. More specifically, Bina describes her appreciation of being able to communicate with other English language learners. Again, this
helps her to feel more secure about her language skills not only in the classroom, but also in co-curricular activities: “My communication, ummm… helping peoples…That in the clubs, any kind of clubs I go I got to share my ideas, I got to speak with other peoples and… ya” (Interview 2). Hence, she values these opportunities to voice her opinions in the clubs (Interview 3) and feels that her voice is enhanced by speaking opportunities in the multi-level classroom. She can imagine the links: “Educational imagination is about looking at ourselves and our situations with new eyes” (p. 272). Furthermore, she feels aligned with other English language learners in these clubs as they seek to improve their communication and feel a sense of belonging in their new culture. Members of the clubs discuss the shared goals of the clubs or “[appropriate] the styles and discourses of the constellations in which it expects to have effects” (p. 274).

She also links her group assignments focusing on the school community from the multi-level classroom as tools which support her co-curricular involvement: “Because if I do my assignments in the club then I would like to get into my clubs too. So I can like get to other people and talk about my opinions and other stuff that I want to I have an it’s my opinion that I can talk about that” (Interview 3). Moreover, she appreciates opportunities in group activities because they help her feel less isolated as a newcomer: “Ya so like if I’m here and if I don’t have friends then if I talk get in groups or I can talk to other people so I can like I don’t feel lonely that I don’t have friends any in here” (Interview 3). Also, Natalie connects her self-confidence to participate in co-curricular activities directly to her group work activities with peers who are in her multi-level classes:

Ahhh… for example if I go in for the Russian club or some like another one, ahhh… and I meet many friends and then I have classes with them it’s more comfortable because we have talk about something we have some conversations and we have bet more friends at school that you don’t think that you’re alone in the school. (Interview 1)

Similar to Bina, she highlights how she values the conversations with her friends which help her feel more a part of the school community. Likewise, in the questionnaire, intermediate English language learners cite that they feel great confidence in participating in co-curricular activities. By drawing confidently from their knowledge of communication gained in the classroom, Bina and Natalie willingly take on new challenges and responsibilities in co-curricular and community activities. This is an example of what Wenger (1998) cites as an engaging classroom that supports identity formation (p. 272).
Also, when questioned about their satisfaction with their participation in the community outside of school, both women feel happy by giving the highest rating: Out of 6, Bina says, “I would feel ummm… probably 4 to 5” (Interview 1); Natalie responds enthusiastically by stating, “how I feel outside of school? OK I think think 6” (Interview 1). Bina sights she is pleased with her participation in the community because she leverages what she has gained in the multi-level classroom: communication skills with a diverse group of learners: “It also feel confident to get to learn more English. Also to get to know more people that you don’t know and you can make friends as you get to know each other and talk to them and you can like call them sometime and ask some questions” (Interview 1). Moreover, she acts as a translator for her parents: “I said it because like I don’t go outside that much in the community. But still like whenever I go outside I got to speak as much as I want to. So ya” (Interview 2). Again, she links her work in the multi-level classroom to her ability to communicate in the community:

Maybe ummm… tolerate ahhh… activity and works with ummm… groups and teams…Like working with the people, that’s kind of activities, sometime he give you ummm… Mr, Orellana give us ummm… the activity to do with the group that that can help the community outside…Like you gotta share like you got to brainstorm your ideas and like you got to share the idea and like dis like make a decision between your groups and all…(Interview 2)

Through the variety of activities that require group work and the sharing of ideas, she feels empowered to interact in the community outside of school. In fact, she also acts as an ambassador when her family or friends are newcomers: “Probably when you have to like if your relatives or other friends they’re new and they want to go somewhere then we can like get to group and then we can go whatever like other people wants to go” (Interview 3). She also links her ability to work in the classroom with multicultural friends with her ability to live in multicultural Toronto: “If you know different cultures than you can like understand the other culture. So you can like the other people can do respect your culture” (Interview 3). Similarly, Natalie explains how she is able to envision how her speaking in group work activities have benefited her in her employment: “…I go to work because they’re all multiculture and I speak try to speak English and now I’m not so scared to speak maybe with mistakes but I speak. And I think it’s better” (Interview 1). Again, she attributes her ability to communicate at work to her participation in group speaking activities in the multi-level classroom:

For example, if we have some ahhh… project we have not my I have in a group not my friends but something like I don’t know ahhh… where I never talk to him but we have a
project together we go outside we talk about what we supposed to talk about ahhh… ummm…about this project then we can maybe start be friends. I don’t know. Something like that. (Interview 1)

In addition, she stresses that it is important to pay attention to learning about different ethnicities because she can transfer this skill to her future career. Natalie highlights that nonverbal communication is an important aspect to know for navigating in a multicultural society:

Ya, because for sometimes one lesson we have in the GLS that each culture supposed to for example, I don’t remember like what’s very bad for example in the Ukraine to facial expression or maybe some words, and for Canada for example, it’s good. Then we supposed to know what’s it’s good good for Canada but bad for our country or like… Or for other countries In India I don’t know In ahhh… Russia for example, or Israel too. Like maybe some body language it’s bad for Israel… (Interview 2)

She also mentions in her second journal that her help with lower level students in the multi-level classroom can also help them in the community: “Now I help students like me, at them first day translation to them at clas, sometime helps them outside of school.” (Journal 2).

Hence, Natalie too appreciates her ability to transfer the skills she learns in the multi-level classroom into the community. She especially values the link to her employment since she feels a great sense of responsibility in supporting her family as newcomers: this job enables her to help. Bina and Natalie show that they imagine trajectories between what they do in the classroom and ways that they can support their family: guide, translator or income earner. Through this, they also indicate their alignment to their family and community when they “…engage in learning communities in activities that have consequences beyond their boundaries, so that students may learn what it take to become effective in the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 274). As well, in the questionnaire, middle level participants stress that they are happy with opportunities to participate in jobs and clubs in the community.

**Teacher/Self.** Bina cites that other reasons for her feeling pleased with her participation are “Ummm… probably the teachers and myself and activities. Because like teacher they can help you more and myself I can confident confident in myself, and activities it get activities sometime it help you to get more understanding of the subject you are learning” (Interview 1). On a similar note, Natalie lists her attitudes and the teacher as major factors for how comfortable she feels in participating in the class. The teacher acts as a mirror of how Natalie sees herself:

Ummm… maybe the teacher ahhh… will not be so like ummm… strong like ummm… … Strict, ya. Ahhh… because sometimes when you don’t understand and he’s
screaming at you like you feel feel yourself so stupid. And that you don’t want to do anything. You sitting in a corner and ‘it’s OK don’t touch me, don’t don’t speak to me I’m just sitting alone here.’ (Interview 1)

Factors which inhibit students’ ability to belong to a community of practice

Self. When Bina and Natalie discuss their feelings about the primary factors which inhibit their participation in the multi-level ESL classroom, they unanimously agree that they are the main factor. Typically, Bina feels quite comfortable with her participation in the multi-level classroom (Interview 2). However, she sometimes dislikes activities which require her to move around the classroom since she is often tired from many late nights with homework: “No it’s like I like the like physical like activity but like when I get tired I don’t like to do that so and I also like to do more activity that helps getting into groups and help to know people and get to know peoples like more” (Interview 3). On a similar note, Natalie feels that her inability to participate comes from within, but she notes that her participation would increase when teachers encourage her; this would then build her self-confidence: “…half the class maybe I don’t understand or can’t speak because I’m so shy, but you like… I don’t know… make me free a little bit when I came you just ‘Don’t worry. It’s gonna to be OK…’ And then like teacher’s very help you then” (Interview 2). In contrast, when she receives harsh criticism, it paralyzes her ability to participate: “…when teacher’s screaming … it’s I don’t know… it’s like you’re sitting, ‘OK, my God I feel myself so stupid. Don’t touch me, please’” (Interview 2).

Course Work. Some of the activities do not challenge Bina: “Because the activity sometime I don’t like to do it… because I get bored” (Interview 3). She would prefer more speaking activities so her confidence could grow which will allow her to participate more in mainstream classes: “I would say list ahhh… speaking…So like that like the ESL ESL people can get ummm… better in the communication…Also then they can understand ummm… what their teacher saying to what lesson their teacher teaching them” (Interview 3). It is therefore not surprising that she invents a peer mentoring role for herself where she is able to use her speaking skills.

Like Bina, Natalie finds that at times, the work bores her; however, she finishes quickly and takes advantage of opportunities for conversation or peer mentoring:

Ahhh… sometimes it’s not so not boring but sometimes we don’t… like you told we we do the work but we can do it for 5 or 10 minutes but we like the teacher doing the 20, 25
minutes and I done this work for 5, 10 minutes and then I sitting and chatting because I don’t want to don’t know what else to do. (Interview 2)

Natalie knows these opportunities to converse in English, although not part of the curriculum, will help improve her communication in mainstream classes where she feels very challenged:

Mmmm… un uncomfortable. If if if she explain, it’s gonna be like physics words that I don’t know like it was a little bit hard I’m just looking at her OK, whatever, I don’t understand what you’re talking about. She OK try ahhh… ex explain… Ahhh… she tried to explain me more better but sometimes when you in ahhh… not mixed class you in a regular English it’s so hard because they speak English free… (Interview 1)

Here, Natalie shows an attempt go beyond the curriculum so that she feels “engaged in the pursuit of a socially meaningful experience, and [her] learning is in the service of that engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 271). In the questionnaire, on two occasions middle level participants give importance to how they would like their teachers to do more to help them increase their ability to participate in the multi-level classroom.

Native Speakers-Language Barriers. Both Bina and Natalie note that they feel awkward in co-curricular activities only when they are mixed with native speakers since they are nervous about their communication in English; this is why they wish to increase their speaking in the multi-level class. Bina notes, “In the regular students, that is therefore there it’s easy to speak English and it’s hard to speak English … and also as the same as I said it before as difficult to understand and what words they speak as a different in your country you learned” (Interview 1). This feeling impacts her willingness to voice her ideas during club meetings, whereby she does not express herself to the same degree as she would in a co-curricular activity designed for English language learners: “No, not the same thing like but like you they ask you for your ideas and we got to sare share it so like it’s easy to say it like share your ideas” (Interview 2). However, it should be noted that Bina is not only a participant in the clubs for English language learners or immigrants, but she is a leader in these co-curricular activities: “My friend took me to Jewish club. I have to I go to South Asian club. My friend also took me to Spanish club today. I go to French club. ESL Ambassador Club” (Interview 2). In fact, during Observation 2, she arrived late to class because she had “been preparing a cultural celebration…” Likewise, Natalie recounts an experience in a regular classroom whereby native speakers ridiculed her and this has left a lasting impression and dissuades her from participating in co-curricular activities when native speakers are present:
They scream at us: ‘What are you not in Can you now in Canada speak Russian ahhh… speak English!’ But I was a few day days just in school and I just looking at them: ‘Why? It’s like I can’t understand I just …’ It was they not was so nice and they know they understand what I was new in Canada, they understand I speak English bad but they just don’t care about that. ‘OK. Go ahead it’s your problems...’ (Interview 1)

She further explains how this desire to participate in co-curricular activities has been thwarted: “Ya. Because I think why I supposed to be with them in a club for example in basketball team if they don’t care about me? They just… If I OK, for example, I go with with them to the club and then I don’t was to feel myself like a part of team what I wi I will do in there? I don’t want to go there” (Interview 1). In contrast, she does participate in cultural clubs with English language learners or immigrants: “In school, Russian club, but it’s very not so very often going there” (Interview 2). The main reason that she does not participate in the club is because she works to support her family: “First, I don’t have time because I’m working” (Interview 2). In the questionnaire, middle level participants call for more support from their teachers to help them engage in co-curricular activities.

Bina and Natalie’s lives outside of school focus on family and friends who share their first language so their participation is high within these communities; however, it is limited with native speakers and this is why they seek to engage in more group work speaking activities in the multi-level classroom. Bina indicates that although she is communicative when she is with her family and helps them with translation and orientation because she knows more English, she still feels uncomfortable with her participation because of the challenges she faces with comprehension:

Outside of the school, it’s ummm… it’s more hard because all Canadian people talk so fast that sometimes you could couldn’t understand that what they said. But if you ask them again, what is it then they can explain it like goes a little slow and then explain it to you again so you can understand (Interview 1).

Also, Natalie states that her lack of language proficiency negatively impacts her ability to participate in the community outside of her family and friends. She sees a direct link between her feelings with native speakers in the school and native speakers outside of the school

Ahhh… Outside. I don’t know maybe… what happens in school then out outside? More time it’s English I… if I don’t have ESL classes if I don’t ESL classes I I just sitting ‘OK I don’t know, just let me sit here.’ Ahhh… of course English because I’m come here I’m just been in ESL B. I’m so scared to speak if you remember that. I would as ask me I know how to ahhh… how to answer but ahhh… answer the question but I’m
just was so scared to speak English that outside to go to the ahhh… store or things like that I’m just was scared ‘Just ask me some easy questions I don’t know how to explain them what I want I’m just looking at you OK whatever I’m I’m come next time, bye!’ That’s it. (Interview 1)

In fact, she really only sees the community as equated with her close knit peer group, because when initially asked about the community she replies with the following question: “Community mean friends? Or, or…” (Interview 2). Once she understands that community includes all people, she accentuates her connection to her same language peers, and her struggle to interact with native speakers:

Anywhere. I don’t know. I feel myself free. Maybe, and ahhh… and I go outside with my friends I happy I know… Sometimes w we have friends who speak just English I try to speak… sometimes friends help me to speak, they translate a little bit… (Interview 2)

**Family.** Bina explains she is obligated to be with her parents, or she has a lot of school work to do so she is not very active in the community on her own:

I said it because like I don’t go outside that much in the community. But still like whenever I go outside I got to speak as much as I want to. So ya…Because I always have to go somewhere with my Dad or my Mom. To get something, or like to get to my uncle’s house, or my relatives. Also, sometime I have to so much homework, so I can’t go with my Dad and my Mom. So ya. (Interview 2).

She stresses her low participation outside of the home by stating, “I don’t go to that many I don’t go to clubs on outside of the school” (Interview 2).

**ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom**

This section examines which factors increase and decrease Bina and Natalie’s motivation.

**Factors which make students feel most motivated**

**Peers/Teacher/Self.** When Bina and Natalie answer questions based on the “Actional Phase” of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation, they both state that they feel very happy in the multi-level classroom and give themselves a perfect 6 out of 6 for motivation: Bina says she appreciates the relaxed nature of the classroom: “Ummm… I would say 6, I want I like the GLS class. It’s easy and you can work everyday. If you work there and you don’t feel like you wanted to but you don’t feel like you want to quit the GLS class because it’s easy for you and it’s fun” (Interview 1); similarly, Natalie describes her contentment with the freedom she feels in the classroom:
GLS. It’s 6 because you feel free there. You you I’m just when I go to school, I’m like mmm not for now my I love my ahh… like my best classes for me is GLS and is Sports and Society because Mr. Orellana’s teaching and I know if if I have some problems with other classes he help me. Like I’m just waiting for this class. So, 6. (Interview 1)

Natalie feels free or she has a “sense of autonomy” because she realizes that other students empathize with her and vice versa which makes for a harmonious setting: she self-regulates. In the questionnaire, middle level participants highlight students’ willingness to support each other. As well, she feels that the teachers’ support beyond the curriculum helps her to build her confidence; the “teacher’s influence” is positive. The middle level participants in the questionnaire also agree that teachers’ individual support for students is invaluable.

Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self. Both Bina and Natalie feel content in this class because they appreciate being able to focus on their communication with their teacher and peers in a non-judgemental environment. This stresses generally, the “learner group” is a positive influence on Bina and Natalie in the multi-level classroom. Hence, the “quality of [their] learning experience” is very high. Bina highlights the relaxed context in which she enjoys learning about presentation skills and understanding how body language can change depending on one’s culture: “…GLS sometime you don’t have to do that ya you don’t have to get your brain to work but sometime you do because it’s class and you do everything in there you learn how to present your presentation and also how to see the body language ya” (Interview 1). In her first journal, Natalie describes her motivation as being related to her sense of ease in the multi-level classroom: “I feel good my self in GLS class now because I feel free myself” (Journal 1).

When asked what would increase her motivation, Bina describes speaking activities: I get to do some assignment and projects and quizzes about to make a dialogue and they you have to present to the class, and my group was the first one to go and were so much scared. But after the presentation our teacher said that we done the nice job, we feel so much better. (Journal 1)

In addition, Natalie feels that more speaking group activities would be better: it would force them to work with people from other cultures where they have to speak English to communicate: I trying to speak I supposed to speak because we have a project I can’t sit alone I’m just looking at them, ‘OK fine do whatever you want.’ I’m just sitting and like I’m in a group. Fine. But you supposed to help them especially when you know what to do but can’t speak but you try. (Interview 2)
This empowerment then helps them to speak English in mainstream classes: “Ya of course. You more free in GLS class then in other class be more free” (Interview 2).

Also, both women wish for the multi-level classroom to provide them with activities that would increase their confidence for participating in the school. Bina wants more of a connection to school clubs where students are asked for their input on the types of activities they prefer: “Ahhh… probably the curriculum because in there you’ve got to learn ummm… more more clubs and like you’ve got to learn more information about anything that you are in. Also, as you can do as get more people involved the curriculum” (Interview 1). Also, Natalie would like more activities which reach an audience after school hours:

Maybe give us… not like projects like pro hard projects but some like fun projects to I don’t know mmm… some activities to show like Drama class to see like table tableau whatever you doing… … it’s fun then after school if we so boring you don’t know what to do… no cinema, no I don’t know, no anything, no coffee. We just started to game play play game what are we doing at school like it’s more fun. (Interview 1)

Moreover, they repeat their desire for more group speaking activities in order to better connect to Canadian society: the classroom acts as a training ground for the real engagement: Bina reiterates her first priority: “It would be the activities also also as you’re speaking and also to helping people or go and ask the people ya” (Interview 1); Natalie confirms the crucial role that group speaking activities have for her when she is asked about the multi-level classroom preparing her for the community at large: “Ya of course. For example if you in ahhh… GLS classroom more free speaking you start to speak speak speak then in a clubs you maybe team leader or something like that because you don’t shy anything” (Interview 2). It is clear then that Bina and Natalie self-regulate their motivation by actively making links between the immediate context and future possible contexts.

Cooperative Learning/Self. Another key factor in the multi-level classroom which makes Bina and Natalie feel highly motivated is their ability to help friends with the activities. They choose to become peer mentors and the environment provides “a sense of autonomy” which nurtures their ability to make this choice. Their decision demonstrates that they engage in self-regulation in order to increase their language learning and to maintain their motivation. Furthermore, this engagement underscores that the “classroom reward/goal structure” is cooperative. Bina finds it entertaining when she is interacting with her peers: “Because like it’s fun. The class is fun and like almost everything like you get to learn, you get to know people,
you get to help, everything’ (Interview 3). She repeats this sentiment in her initial journal: “My motivation in the classroom is I feel excited about being in the GLS classroom because I get to help other student…” (Journal 1). Likewise, Natalie feels enjoyment acting as an ambassador in the classroom: “Mmmm… what else like when it’s come a new student of course you you you supposed to help I supp I help them and I feel myself I’m I’m so proud of myself ‘Oh, I help them!’” (Interview 1).

**Self.** This suggests that her own feelings of pride drive her motivation in the end. In fact, Natalie clarifies this when she states she is ultimately responsible for her motivation:

Mmmm… I think nothing like it’s myself. If it’s something wrong outside, I’m coming to school I don’t want to do anything. I’m just sitting and quiet. It doesn’t matter ESL or not ESL class. If it’s ESL it’s more better because you can answer the question if you don’t you don’t care but like you answer the answer ahhh… answer the question…(Interview 1)

In the questionnaire, the middle level participants, like the lower level participants, also strongly show on two occasions that when they face demotivating circumstances or opportunities to better their learning opportunities, they remind themselves of how they must work hard to better their future possibilities.

**Factors which make students feel least motivated**

**Course Work.** In contrast, they feel the least motivated by the work which they both find a bit slow and easy. Bina says that she would appreciate more activities in the multi-level classroom that stimulate her rather than the same activity for all students: “Ahhh… probably the activities because ummm… some of the activities it’s more exciting and you want a more exciting activities in mmm… ESL. So like people can enjoy it and they wants to play more activity as the fun” (Interview 1). Natalie also calls for a change in the “boring” activities whereby they can practice their speaking: “Ya maybe sometimes it’s… it’s be more like not big presentations but presentation about I don’t know… then we supposed to go to class and present it. It’s a little bit more fun because then I supposed to thinking what I can answer not so boring ahhh…” (Interview 2).

**Frustrated with Lower Levels.** Another main concern for Natalie is the behaviour of some of the lower level students. She feels frustrated when they act out because they do not understand the material: “Mmmm… maybe activities and maybe ahhh… some some student. Ahhh… like because all of them I don’t like all of them it’s not so like each other no” (Interview
1). Their misbehaviour annoys her. Therefore, although the dynamics of the learner group tend to be positive, there are moments of tension.

*ESL students’ identity formation and development vis-à-vis their degree of participation in a multi-level classroom*

This section gives light to how Bina and Natalie see themselves in the classroom, in the school community, and outside of the school community. The labels or roles which they attribute to themselves are also identified.

*Students’ perception of themselves in the classroom/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves*

On the whole, Bina and Natalie both identify positively with the multi-level classroom. As well, the roles that they play in the classroom are also linked to the roles they play in the school and in the community at large. In the multi-level classroom they indicate that their positive feelings come from its relaxed nature and their supportive peer group. Bina says she is content: “In my GLS class, I feel excited and confident because it’s easy subject. Also, it all people. It’s kind of your friends. Like you can make them friends and you can also help them if they don’t understand and there’s all level ESL ESL level … it’s it is easier like ask them questions…” (Interview 1); Also, Natalie explains her sense of satisfaction with her peers in the classroom:

>Ahhh… of course, I’m think happy because ESL students they understand my feeling how I feel in ESL for example D now. …if you speak with friends who your level you more easy they understand you what wh if you don’t understand some part of for example ahhh… some one grammar part or grammar they explain you and OK go ahead it it just more better you feel better than you don’t understand something you can help to them…(Interview 1)

Through this positive experience with their peers, in the second interview, both Bina and Natalie identify themselves as a part of the “ESL family” whereby the members support each other, both within the classroom and outside of it, since they recognize they share many goals around adaptation to Canadian life (Interview 2). The questionnaire also shows that the middle level participants feel strong camaraderie with their fellow English language learners which nurtures their willingness to support each other. Similarly, they see the ESL teachers as compassionate leaders of the “ESL family.” Bina describes this role: “I would be explaining my relationship between the the teacher as my friends because I would go and ask them for help and all the thing
that I don’t know…” (Interview 1); Bina also comments about this teacher support in her journal: “I see my self as a confident in the school because I know that my school very well and also I know some teachers too” (Journal 1). Natalie mentions this too: “…In ESL I’m with teachers teachers who are good always with understand us” (Interview 1).

Since they are very connected to their fellow English language learners, it is not surprising then that when asked about the roles Bina and Natalie play in the multi-level classroom, they both indicate that they are helpers: Bina states, “You would probably see me as helping” (Interview 1). Also, in an observation, it is Bina who immediately volunteers to help the group participate in a game (Observation 4). Also, she mentions her leadership in her first journal: “Some time I lead because I like to be a leader because on that I am good at it. For example, sometime we have to do something in the group and everyone pick me to be a leader of the group and they like me as a leader” (Journal 1). Similarly, Natalie reflects, “In GLS classroom maybe not so leader but I help help new student. I help teacher sometimes…” (Interview 1). Through helping a lower level peer, she sees herself as capable: “Maybe because if I remember my first time she just came to school she don’t know anything I show her I show classes I feel myself I know this and that already and I get feel like a leader…” (Interview 3).

Students’ view of themselves in the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

Both Bina and Natalie feel happy in the school where they have a supportive network of friends; many of these friendships originated in the multi-level classroom as Bina indicates: “Mmmm… in the school, I feel happy because I need, I got to learn more English as you go talk to other people…” (Interview 1). Both Bina and Natalie stress that initially it is not easy: Bina describes, “…you feel bad because if you don’t have a friend then you feel lonely…” (Interview 1); Natalie depicts, “And when you come to school, it’s like you lost…”; however Natalie believes that with time, you adapt: “…And you feel more comfortable and you like the school later” (Interview 1). Moreover, in her journal, Natalie describes her feelings when she is outside of her English language peer group: “At school I’m nobody, just one more student” (Journal 2). Regardless, Bina and Natalie both identify positively with their co-curricular leadership roles with their English language learner peers which are remarkably similar to their roles in the multi-level classroom; again, they feel connected to their peers in their struggle to find their place in Canadian society: Bina confidently leads the Ambassadors’ Club which helps newcomers, while
Natalie has lead the Russian Club which promotes her culture. Moreover, in her first journal, Natalie describes herself as free with this peer group: “At school in group people who know me I feel myself free. I know that there are people who are like and want to speak be friend with me” (Journal 1). Also, Bina stresses her “helper” role in co-curricular activities: “…there is more people that you sometimes… they don’t know some stuff so ya you can see me as helping other peoples” (Interview 1); Natalie describes her roles: “Ummm… in club sometimes I’m leader, sometimes I’m helper…” (Interview 1). It is noteworthy that Natalie attributes her confidence to lead clubs as being developed through her leadership or helpfulness in the multi-level classroom. Despite their strong roles in co-curricular activities with their English language learner peers, they both aspire to be more involved in clubs with native English speakers in the future when they feel they have a better command of English. Natalie underlines this point: “Of course, I’ll for example, I’ll b be so happy to go for some clubs with Canadian but when English my English will be will be so will be so better. Maybe then. But not now” (Interview 1).

**Students’ image of themselves outside of the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves**

In the community, Bina and Natalie feel extremely positive with family and friends. In one word, Bina is “excited” about her interactions in the community because she thrives on expanding her knowledge of language and culture as she supports her parents: “Mmmm… I would feel excited because I would go and got to learn new things as that you knows what is it. So ya, I feel excited” (Interview 1). Natalie also describes her life in the community as extremely positive with her friends and family: “I think happy because exciting because ahh… I have many friends who understand me wh who care about me. I care about them. I feel myself free like I don’t know free…” (Interview 1). As mentioned, Natalie stresses how this supportive friendship shifts from the classroom to the school, and finally, to the community: “…when you ahh… need help for example with ESL class they help you with ahhh… essays I have many friends who help me with essay with ahhh… dialogues I don’t know. They help you and ahhh… we go into the cin ahhh… to the cinema together they translate the movies” (Interview 1). She stresses the care from her network of friends in her first journal: “I have many good friend who care about me and I know that I important for that people. I so happy that I have friends like them” (Journal 1). Similarly, she feels empathy from her parents: “Ahhh… with parents I think outgoing is OK like outgoing they understand me when I for example, come from test bad mark
they of course they like a little bit screaming but it’s OK they they understand your English not so good for example…” (Interview 1). At work, she gets frustrated with her communication, but she tries hard to speak English: she feels proud when she succeeds: “‘I can speak free too. Ha!’ (The participant laughs)” (Interview 1). She is grateful for the support from her manager and her coworkers, many of whom are also English language learners from the school: “…I have good trainer she’s understand me and she’s cr ahhh… hel helps you ummm… stu stu students from like my friends” (Interview 1).

In terms of the roles they play within the community, it is clear that often Bina confidently plays the role of leader as she acts as a translator for her family; this mirrors her role as peer mentor in the multi-level classroom; moreover, she wishes to support the family goals of immigration: “… Because ummm… I got to talk about for my parents because some of the parents I don’t my parents don’t my doesn’t know how to speak English that much so I have to help her…” (Interview 1). She describes this leadership in her first journal:

I see my self as confident out side of school too. Because I get to speak English because my mom don’t know that much English and my dad know but sometime he can’t speak that much English. So for that I have to speak English for them. And I am happy to speak English outside of school. (Journal 1)

She also identifies herself as a helper:

Probably you will see me as a … helpers because I help so many people especially as the older people because they can’t you can help them as ahhh… holding like they can you can help as crossing the road to get there and helping their their grocery to get their home. (Interview 1)

Natalie appreciates all of the support from the community and is happy to play the role of harmonizer and helper with her peers, family, and coworkers:

… Sometimes normal if you have some situation, bad situation, every, for example, somebody not fighting, but like fighting in words. They then you started to ‘OK. Stop. Just let me do something like another way. You yo you stop. Quiet. You talk. Then would you change, please.’ Then, for example, some then sometimes I help like I help I don’t know just help wi with some different, many a lot of my friends… Sometimes we talk about their parents because they they understand help, ‘Just OK. It’s gonna be OK. Don’t worry about that. I’ll help you with that’ (Interview 1).

She also mentions in her second journal that she occasionally leads her friends: “Sometimes I feel myself lead, but not usually” (Journal 2). She refers to her leadership again in her third journal: “Like I’m not a leader, because sometimes I feel that I’m new here and I don’t
have that power be leader with my friends, but my character is leader ” (Journal 3). Hence, it is clear that many of Bina and Natalie’s roles as helpers or leaders in the classroom also extend into the school community and Canadian society where they continue to support and be supported by their peers and family as they all adjust to their new lives in Canada.

Like Archie, the lower level participant, they find “identification” and “negotiability” in the multi-level classroom in all three modes of belonging. They invest themselves with their peers: they demonstrate their desire to engage through peer mentoring (engagement); they seek to make connections for themselves in roles beyond the classroom (imagination); they share common goals with their peers and family (alignment). In addition, the multi-level classroom supports their ability to participate in negotiability: they see their input adopted by their peers which is especially true of their lower level peers (engagement); they gain “vicarious experience through stories” (Wenger, 1998, p. 190) shared by their peers so that they better understand how to handle new experiences (imagination); they actively take part in shaping the shared goal formation of their peers and family through persuading or advising (alignment).

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

When considering Bina and Natalie’s responses to questions about their participation in the multi-level classroom and their motivation to learn English, there are notable similarities not only regarding their participation, but also their motivation. Furthermore, there are key parallels among their responses regarding their participation and their answers about their motivation. This is not surprising considering Lave and Wenger (1991) stress that the primary motivation for learning should indeed be to increase learners’ participation. Moreover, Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that “when central participation is the subjective intention motivating learning, changes in cultural identity…are inevitably part of the process” (p. 112). From this point then, it is understood that students’ feelings about their participation and motivation impact their identity formation and development. This suggests that the two models can be linked.
Hello,
We want you to know that some of our feelings are not exactly the same about this multi-level class. The work is pretty much the same for all the students. Because of that, it is really slow for us, but the lower levels take a lot of time to do the work. Lots of times they need the work translated for them. Because it is slow, it is also relaxed. This is good sometimes, but at other times we are worried that we won’t be prepared for the future. We want more of a challenge. Sometimes for some of us who are higher level, we just get so bored that we become lazy or we try to make the class go faster by helping the lower levels. This is good because we practice our speaking and get to know about other cultures. This can help us later in life. Our teacher is like a friend who makes us comfortable to ask questions about anything we want. Sometimes students take advantage of his kindness. Most of the time the teacher helps the lower levels and we do work on our own. He does try to help all of us though if we need it. He always tries very hard to check our faces to make sure we get it. Sometimes when the teacher is with the lower levels it is because they cause problems because they’re frustrated. Sometimes the higher levels cause problems too like when they go to the computers without the teacher’s permission. Even though the behaviour of the students bothers us, sometimes I (Mark) feel sorry for them because I remember how it was so we’re kind of like a family. Besides, it’s good for me because maybe the class will go faster and I will practice my speaking in a group with new people and nobody will laugh at me when I speak. It will help me later. I (Rame) don’t get it because I came as a higher level and don’t understand what they’re going through. I would rather be left alone and not bother with the lower levels. We both know a lot of higher levels who would rather have a break than help the lower levels like me (Rame). If I (Rame) do help them, I usually use my first language. It helps a lot. We both know that the other lower levels look up to us and it makes them work harder so they feel they can be like us. But sometimes, they feel shy around us. We both think that maybe classes without so many lower levels would be better for all of us.
See you!
Mark and Rame

(A summary of Mark and Rame’s responses rewritten by Mark)

Portrait of Mark

Background
Mark is a male from Israel. He immigrated to Canada at the age of 14. At the time of this research, he had been 1 year in Canada. Prior to coming to Canada, he studied English for 4 years. He lives with his parents, and his two brothers in a house: he is the middle child. He speaks Hebrew and English. He is a grade 10 intermediate-advanced English language learner (ESL D) in the following courses: Civics and Careers, English, Science, and GLS (Learning Strategies). His hobbies include tennis, basketball, and photography. He wears casual and athletic-fashionable clothing. At school, he is very quiet yet very helpful with his peer group and sees himself as a “leader” and member of the English language learner “family” at the school. He is a responsible student who strives to maintain an outstanding average. His friends are mainly other English language learners who are from a variety of cultures; however, he is eager
to befriend more native speakers. His co-curricular interests are the ESL Ambassadors’ Club, and ESL Drama Club along with the Tennis team.

Classroom

Mark sits at the front of the class during the semester. Consistently, he is a very quiet student who listens attentively as the teacher talks. He also works with little assistance. If he has a question, he approaches the teacher. When the teacher asks questions, he eagerly volunteers answers. He frequently finishes his work early and either works on other homework or he wanders the class to see if his friends need assistance. He does not receive any additional work. During the first observation, he helps other students who are in lower levels even when they do not share the same first language with Mark. This means that Mark must use a lot of non-verbal communication. His willingness to engage in this cooperative learning reveals his extremely patient and kind nature. However, throughout the rest of the observations, he mainly works alone. When students act out, he sits quietly waiting for the teacher to control the classroom. He is consistently a model student: even when the teacher does not arrive, he sits at his seat quietly working on homework from another class.

Portrait of Rame

Background

Rame is a female from the Philippines. She arrived in Canada at the age of 17. At the onset of this research, she had been in Canada 1 month. In the Philippines, she had studied English for 10 years and she had graduated from high school. She lives with her mother and her two siblings in an apartment. She also supports her family by working. She speaks Visaya, Tagalog, and English. She is a grade 11 advanced English language learner (ESL E) in the following courses: Gym, Wood Working, Sports and Society, and GLS (Learning Strategies). She does not mention that she has any hobbies except socializing with her fellow Filipino friends. She wears casual clothing. At school, she stays with her first language peers and identifies herself as a “follower” because she feels insecure as a newcomer. Her attendance is irregular and she often does not do her homework. Yet, she is happy when she excels in her classes. Her co-curricular interests are the ESL Ambassadors’ Club although she has yet to attend.
Classroom

Rame can always be found sitting with her Filipino peers near the front of the classroom. The peers are also in the more advanced English classes. Throughout all of the observations, when the teacher talks, she chats with her peers in a soft voice. She does not volunteer to answer questions even though she is one of the most advanced students in the room. Also, in all of the observations, she does not assist the lower level students like other intermediate or advanced peers. Moreover, when given tasks, she does not always focus on them. Instead, she chats in Tagalog. Throughout three of the observations, she wears her MP3 player and she checks her makeup instead of doing the work. During one observation, the teacher presses her to focus but since she is not disruptive, she is left on her own and then she chats and listens to her music. Given this behaviour, it is understandable that during another observation, she has not done her homework and rushes to finish it on the day that it is due.

**Questionnaire Responses-Higher Level Students**

Out of 53 participants, 44 were higher level English language learners in ESL D, ESL E, or finished ESL courses; however, 9 of them did not complete the entire questionnaire. Therefore, 35 advanced level participants finished the questionnaire.

In Table 5 below, the 21 questions listed are the highest weighted score for the questionnaire. The shaded group within this table shows the intersection with the highest weighted score for the higher level participants.

Given the high participation rate of the advanced level students in the questionnaire, some significance can be given to these responses in relation to Mark’s and Rame’s answers. Significant answers will be noted throughout the chapter.

**Table 5: Online questionnaire responses-higher level participants.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Questionnaire Questions</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, then I do feel welcomed in the school.</td>
<td>16 12 6 2 2</td>
<td>190 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 12 4 2 2</td>
<td>170 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my participation in the community outside of school in such activities as jobs and clubs.</td>
<td>17 10 4 3 3 1</td>
<td>184 / 4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 9 3 3 2 1</td>
<td>167 / 4.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If I get frustrated in classes that have students from different levels of English, I remind myself of how important it is for my future to keep working hard.  

When I am in classes with students from different levels of English, I am able to ask for help from other students.  

I am happy with my involvement in activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.  

When I am doing group-work in classes that have students from different levels of English, I like working with students who are at the same level as I am.  

In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help me get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama.  

Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English.  

In the classes that have students from all different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help increase my ability to take part in the class.  

When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I feel like I have a lot to offer to teams, or clubs.  

When there are classes that have students from different levels of English, I am happy that the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.  

If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, I also do feel welcomed in the community outside of school.  

In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.  

When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I see myself as an important member because I work or I am in a club or an organization.  

When I am in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I do feel welcomed by other students and teachers.  

Teachers are available to provide me with the time I need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.  

Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than other classes.  

If there were extra work to do for multi-level classes, I would volunteer to do it because I know that it is good for my learning.  

I like working with students who have the same level of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If I get frustrated in classes that have students from different levels of English, I remind myself of how important it is for my future to keep working hard.</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>179 / 4.71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160 / 4.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am in classes with students from different levels of English, I am able to ask for help from other students.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175 / 4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>157 / 4.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my involvement in activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>173 / 4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>154 / 4.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am doing group-work in classes that have students from different levels of English, I like working with students who are at the same level as I am.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>173 / 4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>156 / 4.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help me get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>171 / 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>152 / 4.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>170 / 4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150 / 4.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from all different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help increase my ability to take part in the class.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>170 / 4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>152 / 4.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I feel like I have a lot to offer to teams, or clubs.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>167 / 4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>151 / 4.44</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When there are classes that have students from different levels of English, I am happy that the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>167 / 4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>149 / 4.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, I also do feel welcomed in the community outside of school.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>165 / 4.34</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>146 / 4.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>165 / 4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>149 / 4.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I see myself as an important member because I work or I am in a club or an organization.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>163 / 4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>148 / 4.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I do feel welcomed by other students and teachers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162 / 4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>146 / 4.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are available to provide me with the time I need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>161 / 4.24</td>
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<td>143 / 4.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than other classes.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>160 / 4.21</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>146 / 4.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there were extra work to do for multi-level classes, I would volunteer to do it because I know that it is good for my learning.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160 / 4.21</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145 / 4.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like working with students who have the same level of</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>158 / 4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter addresses the four main research questions with regard to the advanced English language learner (ESL D/ESL E). Then, it draws attention to the possible linkage of the two conceptual frameworks.

Nature of the ESL students’ overall experience in a multi-level classroom with regard to the multi-level language groupings literature

This section looks at Mark and Rame’s experience in a multi-level classroom with reference to their course material, their teacher, and their peers.

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their course material in a multi-level classroom

Same Work. Mark indicates that the activities are the same for all levels and often, because of this, it is a challenge to meet everyone’s needs:

I think it’s going slowly because you need more time because the As take them for example 10 minutes to understand something and the E and the D maybe 5 minutes. Then you need to find some agreement between them or them or you have to go a little bit slower because if you will go a little bit faster it will make it will be much harder for the ESL A and B. (Interview 2)

Rame confirms that there is no distinction in the work for the different levels: “Ya, actually, we have even though we have different kinds of level in ESL, we still have the same activities. So we all have experience all of it” (Interview 1); however, like Mark, she adds it is often too challenging for their lower level classmates:

Mmmm… sometimes I I have a classmate and she doesn’t really understand English because she is from Russia, and I said like what’s ummm… maybe sometimes I feel that sh she must ummm… have more studies in English. Ya because sometimes our teacher like guide him to what ahhh… like if we have an activity, she always asks from the other classmates to ummm… what do you call this? Like translate it for the Russian language. (Interview 1)

Work is Simple and Slow. Mark points out that he feels held back by this type of work although sometimes he is happy to not feel stressed about school: “Emmm… I personally don’t like it because I want to learn more and get more stuff done but sometime it’s it’s OK for me
because I feel more comfortable and more relaxed and less tension and rushing” (Interview 2).

Similarly, Rame describes that she does not feel fulfilled when the class work is the same for all levels:

Because like ummm… we’re more advanced than them so it’s not like ummm… so for us it’s like easy but mmmm… it’s not like ummm… I want a challenge more to be ummm… to be ummm… what is the word? I want more challenging activities so that I so that ummm… you know ummm… my learning… so that I get more information. (Interview 3)

Bell (1991) identifies the need to diversify the activities for the multi-levels: “The real challenge comes in devising satisfactory activities that the other group will be able to work on without needing constant checking, encouragement, or intervention from the teacher” (p. 106). In addition, Hess (2001) promotes variety in the curriculum:

Variety is important in all teaching. It is particularly relevant in large multi-level classes because we have so many styles of learning and attention spans to relate to… Students cannot concentrate on an activity for more than a limited length of time. If an activity goes on too long, the mind begins to wander… In large classes such a lack of attention can prove disastrous… (pp. 8-9).

Also, Yoshida (1998) continues to describe the desire to have courses “suited to the needs and interests of students at each skill level” (p. 72). In particular, both Mark and Rame agree that the pace is far too slow for them. In fact, Mark confirms that the majority of the time he would like to move at a faster percentage: “I think 70 or 80. Most of the time, I want to go faster” (Interview 2). In the second observation, the following is noted about Mark’s work: “When he engages in a booklet activity, he sits with another higher level student. They work quietly. He finishes first in the class. He quietly wanders in the classroom” (Observation 2). As well, in his journal he comments: “In GLS, it’s very easy, because it has student from all ESL level” (Journal 1). This clearly reinforces that the pace is far too slow to meet Mark’s present academic needs.

Mark suggests that a consequence of having many levels in a course could be that the class gets behind in what they need to do for the course requirements or they are forced to rush through the material at the end. He describes his experience in a multi-level class from the previous year: “… we didn’t have enough time to cover everything or it can also be because of the multi-level classes or maybe because it was a lot of first year for a lot of students there or maybe because it was the first year of high school…” (Interview 3). He points out the disastrous results:
… most of the class like 13 out of 15 got really bad good mark like around 60% to 70% at the end. And finally I mean somehow we get through it we didn’t exp because at the beginning it was hard but it’s the marks weren’t that bad they are around 75% to 85% and suddenly they are like a bomb went down. (Interview 3)

Rame says that if the course were going faster, “Mmmm… I would be happy” (Interview 2). She continues, “Ya. So it’s not really challenging so sometimes I get bored. So sometimes I needs like ahhh… I need I don’t really get in motivated like easily because of like very simple, and very easy. So sometimes like mmmm… sometimes I’m looking for like more challenging. I guess” (Interview 2). She states that she is waiting 50% of the time in the multi-level classroom: “Like when like for example, mmmm… for example there’s 1 hour then our teacher give us like 30 min ummm… the whole hour to finish it like I’m gonna finish it like 1/2 an hour it’s like that” (Interview 2). She echoes her frustration in her first journal: “In my GLS class, I experience that sometimes I got bored of our lesson or activity because it’s kind of easy for me and it’s not much challenging for a ESL E level like me” (Journal 1). Stein (1997) explains that the pace can be problematic in multi-level classes as she recalls students’ experiences:

… it had become very clear that [they] were able to work through the material in the book much faster than others and felt frustrated at the group’s pace… Students were willing to help one another learn, but some were clearly able to move on before others were ready and were beginning to fear that the slower pace of the group would lead somehow to their being penalized… (p. 41)

On a similar note, both Mark and Rame feel concerned that since they are in this class where they are not being challenged by the work, they worry that they will not be prepared for regular classrooms with native speakers. For example, as Mark describes his feelings about the multi-level classroom, his concern emerges: “Ummm… I’m really confident and know the materials but in in the the regular classroom, I I need to to ummm… I need to get used to the to the speed and to the regular subject because I will not have in university the ESL stuff. I need to go faster and to work harder” (Interview 1). More specifically, he states that when he considers all of his multi-level classes, he believes that at the most, half of them provide him with material at a pace that prepares him for future classes with native speakers: “Ehhh… maybe quarter or half of them because there are a lot of new new students each year and they’re they my levels and the higher levels so I think maybe half of them or 25%” (Interview 2). He explains that this is not beneficial for his survival in his post-secondary education: “… in university I will not
have it. In university it will be so fast so so no. I think it’s enough to also to get used to the to the real world and to the to the real pace” (Interview 3). When Rame is asked if she feels that the multi-level classroom prepares her for regular classes, she answers, “Ya, a bit” (Interview 2).

The third observation provides an example of the pattern of Rame’s behaviour in the multi-level class; it is indicative of her not being prepared for mainstream classes:

When they are assigned the work, she pays attention, but she is in no hurry to finish the work. Instead, she uses a compact mirror to check her makeup and hair. She reorganizes her work. She does not start the work for more than half of the class. She takes 30 minutes. Her peer comes by to ask a question. It is not clear that it is classroom work. The teacher approaches to pressure them to work. However, once he moves away she talks to her friend. Ten minutes before the end of class, she is standing and reading her peer’s book. She packs her bag with 10 minutes left and then checks herself in her mirror again. (Observation 3)

Likewise, she also notes in her journal how her study habits are deteriorating: “…I’m not doing fine because my boredom is making me lazy. I’m not paying much attention to class anymore because I kill my boredom by chatting with my friends. And I’m not doing some activities seriously” (Journal 2). Bell (1991) recognizes the challenges of pace in a multi-level classroom: “Some features we may want to change concern pace, balance, and interest in our activities. Pace refers not only to the amount of time we allot for a given activity but to the number of exposures to an item that we provide students before we expect mastery” (pp. 66-67). Likewise, Hess (2001) expresses the challenges for individual learning styles: “We would like to allow for each of our students to find his/her preferred and unique way and pace of learning” (p. 6). She continues “in large multi-level class it is particularly important to provide opportunities for students to work at their own pace…” (p. 12). Similarly, Yoshida (1998) underscores that teachers should avoid giving, “course material and activities that demotivate students (e.g., material and activities that are irrelevant to student interests and needs, that appear to have no purpose other than keeping students busy” (p. 72).

Preference for Speaking in Groups. Despite their frustration, both Mark and Rame acknowledge that they value speaking activities in their multi-level classroom for its support in co-curricular or community activities: Mark says the communicative activities play a small role in supporting his involvement: “Maybe listening and presenting which is speaking but no, not really” (Interview 3). However, in his journal, he stresses how much he appreciates the opportunities to improve reading or speaking in public through activities in the multi-level
classroom: “With ESL classes my experience was also better because my strength of weaks such as reading in front of the class I practiced these weaknesses and I hope in the long/short term future I will be able to read or speak more in discussion” (Journal 2).

Similarly, Rame explains that even though she is a higher level, she has just arrived in Canada so she does not feel confident with her communication and she appreciates the opportunity to speak in English: “…sometimes I communicate with others in for example, sometimes I feel conscious about my English even though I am ESL E and I communicate with my friend… in English like we speak English sometimes…” (Interview 1). Rame stresses that the socializing time in class actually aids her in building her confidence to participate in both co-curricular and community activities: when she is asked about activities which help her to connect with others she urges,

… socializing like ummm… before I don’t really like talk to others especially when they’re not mefe they’re not like me Filipino. So, after that, mmmm… like I started to like talk to others. Ya oth other nationalities and outside outside of school I also try to talk to them and socialize. So that’s it and make friends on the outside so that’s it. (Interview 2).

Also, Mangan-Lev (1997) highlights the value of speaking activities in multi-level classes as the foundation for cooperative learning.

As well, they both appreciate group activities because they recognize how that will help them in the future. For instance, Mark acknowledges that the multi-level GLS class group work will help him with regular courses so that he will achieve higher marks for post-secondary school: “…it’s more technique that will help you to improve your marks in other courses though in university to to make your life easier” (Interview 3). As well, he values mixing with different newcomers in the multi-level classroom and calls on other classes to address issues of immigration and multiculturalism so that students will be better equipped to interact in a multi-cultural setting:

Emmm… maybe to teach them sometimes about other cultures or or to try to to give them the experience what what is to be immigrant and then maybe they will be more aware of others and they like it’s material to think about and then they will say, ‘Oh, we did this, we did this, we don’t have to do this.’ (Interview 2)

Rame also values the opportunities to mix with different cultures in the multi-level classroom: “Mmmm… ummm… like if we have a group activity like we have different we have to group
than we have different like different nationality then we speak English to them so maybe I practice my lang my skills in speaking to them like English then…” (Interview 2).

She stresses that she needs to not be shy “Because now I like to know more about them so…Because I want to make friends so” (Interview 3). In addition, in the questionnaire, higher level students show strong agreement about the value of working with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Another issue raised by Mark and Rame is that the multi-level classes should contain curriculum which encourages students at all levels, but especially the lower level students, to get involved in co-curricular and community activities where they can be valuable participants: they explain that activities do not always require language skills to participate. Mark remembers his own experience as a lower level learner: “Because I know they also like the same hobbies I do so I can communicate in other ways not just verbal communication, but also… we have the same hobby so we are happy or we came for the same reason” (Interview 1). He continues that the multi-level courses curriculum should push lower level students to join activities because

…they will not go alone or they will not be aware of the activity. So I think we need to push them a little bit to do the activity or to bring it closer to them because for example, I really liked to, I really want to play in the intramural basketball but all the time before the announcement come in the in science everyone talk and I I I don’t like to tell them to stop talking because I want to listen to the announcements so I miss it and now I need to wait for last for next year. (Interview 3)

Rame agrees with Mark but acknowledges that since she is not especially athletic, participating on a sports team would have made her feel awkward on another front besides her language proficiency (Interview 3). Hence, she highlights the importance of having curriculum which encourages participation in a wide-variety of co-curricular activities.

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their teacher in a multi-level classroom

Teacher is a Friend. Mark and Rame see their ESL teacher as a friend who they can receive support from for a variety of issues beyond the multi-level classroom. Mark is very clear in that he sees his ESL teacher as a friend versus his other teachers:

Emmm… in the ESL teachers it’s it’s almost the same as the friend. It’s very comfortable and I can ask them question anytime I want… In the ESL classes, it’s a little bit slowly and more and more nice between th the teacher and the students. Sometimes too nice. (Interview 2)
He highlights that students often take advantage of the teacher’s kindness. In his first journal, he mentions this again:

...the relationship with the ESL teachers is more calm and relax, but sometime too relax during classes and if the teacher is too soft with the students it makes the class a bit lazy. For example, after lunch I have GLS. When I have GLS, I don’t really care to be late...
(Journal 1)

He stresses that he feels comfortable approaching his ESL teacher with any questions not just course-related topics: “Oh, ehhh… yes, because you can ask the teacher question about other course material or you feel more comfortable maybe to to to get from him the help than from the regular teachers and you’re coming with more smile to the lesson than the regular classes with more clean head…” (Interview 2). These feelings are repeated in his journal: “…in ESL classes I feel that I can ask any time a question and I know the teacher will explain me until I will understand” (Journal 1). In his third journal, he explains one reason why he feels so connected to his ESL teacher:

...in GLS class I know that the teacher is also not original from Canada and he understands how you feel when you immigrant to a new country. This fact that we both were or are in the same position and we have the same ‘language’ of patience and supportive to each other. When the teacher understand your needs as an ESL teacher it really improves your attitude and relationship with the teacher. (Journal 3)

Rame also states that she values her ESL teacher’s support over her friends: “No, I ask the teacher. Like if you have ummm… computer we usually if I if the grammar I wrote is wrong, I’m going to ask the teacher for help ya” (Interview 1). She stresses how comfortable she feels in asking for this support:

Ummm… happy because you know ummm… our teacher is very friendly and I can easily ask questions with and he just answer that’s right. He just help us as ummm… for example, we have an activity she wrote we can easily ask her him to help us and she and he give examples so we can be informed. (Interview 1)

She too states that she feels free to ask him questions that go beyond the scope of the multi-level classroom because she is comfortable with him: “… I can easily ask Mr. Orellana about the like if I if I don’t know the the questions I can easily ask” (Interview 2). She highlights that it is his gentle nature that makes him so approachable. She echoes this sentiment in her journal: “…I feel comfortable because we can easily ask him questions about the topic that we don’t understand and he explains it to us promptly...” (Journal 1).
Individual Attention. Both students underline that their ESL teacher makes a great effort to talk to students individually. Mark emphasizes that individual support is higher than in regular classes when asked if the ESL teacher supports all of the students: “Yes. Absolutely more than the normal classes. Much more” (Interview 1). Moreover, he explains, “And in the ESL classes the teacher sometimes asks you and more maybe make with you eye contact to make sure that you understand and in the regular classes, it’s more general…” (Interview 2). Mark says that the ESL teacher checks with students about 80% of the time versus the regular teacher at about 15% (Interview 3). Rame also appreciates the individual attention from her ESL teacher: “He comes to us for example, ummm… for example, if we have questions, and we just raise our hand and she then he’ll come. Or or she he’ll tour around ahhh… tour around the class and he’ll look at our work so” (Interview 3). Also, in the questionnaire, students strongly agree that there is high availability for individual attention from their ESL teachers.

Regardless of this support, they both feel that the teacher is stressed on some occasions because of this demand for individual attention. Mark says the ESL teacher must spend more time with the lower level learners: “Mmmm… in compared to the… to the higher classes to the higher levels? Ehhh… maybe 20 or 40%. Or sometime no, mmmm… I think 60,65 because they still have to get the the materials done” (Interview 2). Like Bina and Natalie, the middle level participants, he concludes that for the most part the intermediate and higher level students can generally work without much teacher support: “Maybe with the lower level because the maybe C, D, E can go alone. And the A and B needs some help” (Interview 3). On a similar note, in the questionnaire, students indicate significant agreement with the statement that in multi-level classes, they work independently with little help from the teacher. Mark points out that this stress to support the lower level students affects all aspects of the course including evaluation:

Ehhh… for example, if he gives a test, he don’t know if to give 10 minutes, or 15, or 20 because all of the levels but he can’t he cannot make two tests because then it will be too mess too... So, there is he have he need to be concerned about the lower level but also the higher level. So it’s a little bit conflict and go against each other. (Interview 2)

Rame too accepts that their lower level peers need most of the teacher’s attention: “Ya. Because ummm… if ESL A doesn’t ummm… really understand English they can ask teacher ahhh… teacher’s help and also to their classmates” (Interview 1). When she is asked about the teacher supporting the other students at other levels, she acknowledges that they also have the right to ask for help and can often ask their peers if the teacher is engaged with the lower level students
(Interview 1). In the fifth observation, the focus on the lower level students is highlighted and Rame is left to do as she pleases: “Throughout all of the observations, she does not disturb the class so it appears the teacher leaves her alone and focuses on the lower levels” (Observation 5). Although the teacher gives a great deal of support to the lower level learners, often his attention to them is not concerning academics, but rather it is about their behaviour. Often the lower level students are not focused on work, possibly because they struggle with their language proficiency, and get distracted. The result is that the teacher has to frequently discipline them. This frustrates Mark a great deal: when he is asked about something he would like to change in the multi-level class, he suggests that the lower level learners be near the teacher so that he can control them better:

Mmmm… maybe a bit stricter teacher a bit I I think it still soft to be nice and patient but a bit more but from the beginning because if it’s too late the the student will not care. And maybe the arrangement of the class. To put all the ESL A and B in front because they need more help than the C, D, and E. So or to mix them around, or to put the the A in front. And… and that… (Interview 3)

Mark also highlights that classroom management challenges are not only caused by the lower level students but also by the higher level learners when they feel unchallenged by the work; they go to the computers without the teacher’s permission: “Yes, because when one person on the computer the other one works and then the other one on the computers then the other one will…” (Interview 2). When they do this, they disrupt the class and their lower level peers who are frustrated with the work often follow them to the computers. Hess (2001) validates that when students’ are feeling bored, “…they are likely to either cause trouble or create the kind of distraction that will focus on them rather than on the lesson” (pp. 9-10).

Nature of the ESL students’ experience with their peers in a multi-level classroom

**Empathy for Peers.** Mark and Rame have different levels of empathy for their lower level classmates. Mark highlights that he feels connected to the other English language learners because he has shared in their experience; he recalls his own struggle as a lower level learner when he feared approaching others for help:

Ya. I really want to help them because I know that 1 year ago I also was in the same situation with wi without a way to communicate very much of the the English. Because it was very difficult and I also was scared to ask someone. So in order if I will go to to give them help, or if I will ask them, they will say yes and they they they won’t be scared cause I think they are scared to ask for help because they don’t know us or they don’t
have good way to communicate so if I I will start it, they they will be more comfortable and it’s gonna be easier for them. (Interview 2)

Moreover, he describes his ESL multi-level class as a very close-knit environment: “…I really like this class because it’s… it’s… it’s more than a class. It’s more like a family or more a happy place to be. So, I would not give up on that class” (Interview 3). He also mentions this point in his first journal: “In ESL classes I feel more like a family because we are always together when we need help from each other” (Journal 1). Overall, he feels proud of himself that he has supported others about 10% of the time (Interview 3): “I’m happy with that but I happy to myself. I think that it need [not] to be official or something but… I help them, I’m happy and that’s it” (Interview 3). Rame also recognizes the connection that many higher level students feel toward lower level peers; she notes how the lower level classmates feel comfortable asking for support:

Mmmm… because it’s more in helping each other. Like like I I saw like one of my classmates… if she like she did she didn’t don’t understand any English so she always ask about her other other relations so they help her so I think that’s more like helping each other that makes family. (Interview 2)

Rame explains that the higher level learners often feel empathy because they have been in the others’ place: “Because they they were there before like they were A they didn’t know anything so someone helped them so that’s what they do, they also help others. That’s right now that they are more higher, higher level” (Interview 2). Conversely, Rame explains that she, herself, does not relate to the lower level students’ struggle:

Ya. Me ahhh… I haven’t experienced like being an A or because I get directly in the level highest level so maybe I’m not really kind of sometimes interested so if they needed help they they make they like to translate it from me so sometimes I give the ESL A the I give them directly the answers so to make it easier. (Interview 2)

Balliro (1997) alerts educators not to get angry with students for providing answers to the lower level learners since they feel great empathy for their struggle: “they may be following a deeply ingrained cultural imperative to work collectively so others do not lose face” (p. 53). Office of Refugee Resettlement (1982) also stresses “a good class ambience is very important in helping to decrease any existing antagonism and feelings of inferiority on the part of the weaker students” (p. 9).
Mark also points out that because most of his peers understand each others’ struggle, it is beneficial to him as well because he feels comfortable in expressing himself and this improves his speaking:

Emmm… I don’t afraid to make mistake or I’m not afraid to speak I’m... I’m more relaxed and much more confidence because they also in in the GLS they are also ESL students that make you feel more confident because they also sometimes afraid to make mistakes and they’re new to Canada and in the in the native speaker in in science you don’t feel the same ahh... the same tension there is much more tension in the science class that I feel. (Interview 2)

He repeats these feelings in his first journal: “I think it really helps me to feel comfortable in class because I know that other people can make mistakes and no one will laugh or talk behind their back” (Journal 1). Like Mark, even though she is at the highest level of English, Rame also realizes the importance of being in a risk-free environment: “Ya. Because if I get mistakes they they won’t mind because they also make mistakes so. Cause we’re all the same we’re ESL cl ESL students so...” (Interview 3).

Cooperative Learning. Despite this group cohesion, the fact remains that Mark and Rame do have different levels of empathy. Their willingness to engage in cooperative learning is proportional to their empathy for the lower level students. Mark wishes to help because he has been in “their shoes”: “Because I also was in that situation on 1 year ago and that to show that they have support that they are not alone in the class and if they need help they just don’t can ask the teacher. They also can ask us” (Interview 3). He goes on to describe the cooperative learning environment:

Ehhh… yes. The I know that it’s more like a family. It’s less tension and even though we are doing work, it’s very relaxed and maybe there are sometimes movies and in compared to the regular classes, it’s always work and tension and we need to get stuff done and work, work, work. (Interview 2)

In an observation, Mark’s empathy for the lower level classmates shines: “When the ESL As become unruly, on his own initiative he approaches a lower level and sits down with him to assist him with the work” (Observation 1) In his second journal, Mark again describes the positive context and the need to support the lower level peers: “About the ESL classes my experience was very positive and comfortable with my peers especially with the C and higher level but B, A level I also talk with them but have to them help” (Journal 2). Hess (2001) stresses the importance of students lending a helping hand: “Such cooperative, interdependent learning
will aid our students in fostering a positive mutual reliance and help them to function better in a highly complex, interdependent society” (p. 3). Likewise, Maddalena (2002) proposes, “that advanced learners are a valuable resource who may actively serve as teaching assistants” (p. 2). Maddalena (2002) also highlights that often the lower level learners solely watch the more advanced level students: her student describes this: ‘I like to listen…even if I cannot understand everything…’” (p. 5). Mangan-Lev (1997) affirms the importance of unity among the English language learners: “Cooperative learning requires a classroom atmosphere trust and respect, one in which learners have gotten to know each other and enjoy learning together” (p. 35). Stein (1997) shows a variety of responses toward cooperative learning: one student says, ‘I think I wouldn’t like to work by myself in a room. I find it distractful. I need for me a lot of encouragement and hearing that I’m doing well”; in contrast, another student states, ‘I like working on my on my own because I can work at my own time’” (p. 43).

In addition, Mark highlights that not all of the higher level students feel the same desire to assist the lower level learners; he explains it can be a low percentage: “Ehhh… mmmm… 20 to 40%. And I think it’s because they don’t really care about the others or even the lesson. Like they think it’s like a a break from the other classes but too much break…” (Interview 3) In fact, Rame feels what Mark has described: she has mixed emotions about supporting the lower level peers and would prefer to relax (Interview 2). Therefore, she chooses to ignore them as much as she helps them: “…sometimes the oth I saw other other classmate they’re having a hard time sometimes I I just ignore them but sometimes I help ya” (Interview 2). Her reason is that she feels it is not her responsibility to help the lower level classmates and therefore, she prefers to do her own activities: “Like I’m kind of disappointed. Ya, because because there’s because ummm… for example you’re the one that’s being asked to translate it for her. You have something else to do like you have to divide your time for her. Ya, that’s all” (Interview 1). In her journal, she reiterates these feelings that she should not have to mentor others: “But anyway, our teacher is there to help them” (Journal 1). Bell (1991) too mentions that more advanced students will be asked to take on this leadership role: “It does mean, though, that students often will be called on to play the role of teacher, that much more work will be done in groups with students organizing their own leadership roles…” (p. 71). If Rame does help, she waits for the lower level students to initiate the contact: “Mmmm… I wait for them to come to me” (Interview 3). If they come to her repeatedly, instead of explaining the material to the lower
level learners, she would rather give them the answers so she has more time to herself (Interview 2).

Also, Mark realizes that by helping the lower level peers, he too benefits. The class will flow more: “Emmm… maybe also that the lesson will go more smoothly and we can go on” (Interview 3). Rame states that her benefit is that she feels that others look up to her: “…sometimes I feel happy because they say, ‘Wow you’re, you’re in ESL E! and ya, and I’m in ESL B. That’s great.’ My friend… she always admired me for that. Ya, so sometimes I feel happy” (Interview 1). Bell (1991) also comments on this benefit: “The advanced students get the satisfaction of demonstrating their prowess and the opportunity to check their control of language by attempting to teach…” (pp. 17-18).

**Use of First Language.** Rame states one tool that is useful when she helps the lower level classmates is the use of her first language: “…if you have like ESL A level you can just can translate it to him and let them know the details and information about that” (Interview 1). She also values the use of her first language when she needs assistance with her work: “…Because I al I always pair sometimes ahh… sir ask us to choose a pair, I always … my partner so it’s easy. Easy for us so we can at least speak Tagalog even do our activity. So that’s easier than…” (Interview 3). Maddalena (2002) points out that, “when the advanced students use their L1 in the class to explain or to clarify, their overall effect on the group is one of consolidation, facilitating the creation of an alliance between the two groups” (p. 7).

**Role Models.** Both Mark and Rame recognize that the lower level students see them as role models. Mark describes his feelings about being in a multi-level classroom: “Ahh… I think it’s more comfortable because you also have the lower levels and you also have the higher levels that kind of challenge you and make you ahh… make sometimes more unconfidence, but also challenge you to get to higher level” (Interview 1). He explains this sentiment: “… because the multi-level… for example, I challenge the A and the C and the D challenge the C so there’s always challenge for everyone and they want to learn more and and improve themselves” (Interview 2). He too reflects on his own appreciation of having more advanced English language learners with him: “Yes. Because you know if they get good mark you also want to get good mark like you compare and I think it’s very good thing” (Interview 2). In addition, Rame acknowledges her role-model status with the lower level learners: “Like sometimes they, ya, that’s what I said they admired us. Like sometimes if I talk like in fluent English they say,
‘Wow, you’re really fluent and you…’” (Interview 1). Like Mark, she is also competitive with her peers who are also advanced English language learners: “Ya peers, because, you know, sometimes I feel that I am in compet…., in a competition, like, I compete with them. Like, having more scores. That’s all” (Interview 1). Bell (1991) highlights the value of role models: “The multi-level class gives an excellent opportunity for those who have strong speaking and listening skills to practice this kind of conversation while simultaneously providing a model for the less advanced students” (p. 81).

**Higher Level Students Frustrated.** Regardless of the cooperative learning and the admiration, often Mark and Rame can get annoyed with the lower level peers because of their neediness and their misbehaviour. Valentic (2005) echoes Mark’s feelings that some students “cause the problems because of lack of involvement in teaching process, some are bored, not motivated and lacking interest for school” (p. 2). In contrast, Mark notes that many higher level students want to focus on advancing themselves in their written work rather than mentoring the lower level classmates: “Ahhh… U Usually they are not give other other people in the in lower level help. But ya. They they are on their own and they concentrate on their essay and all this stuff” (Interview 1). Mark explains that this is because the most advanced learners need to prepare for mainstream classes: “No, because they are ehhh… other interests maybe to finish the ESL courses and to go to Bridge or to have to to finish an essay. So I don’t th maybe because I’m between so maybe… I can help them and not just think about the ESL. I can I also can help them” (Interview 2). Regardless, Mark still feels that he can help the lower level students because he is just entering the more advanced English. Yoshida (1998) shows that when students are asked what features to include in an ESP program, they list the need for a balanced curriculum: “courses that balance language/knowledge input with training in language/knowledge output in the first year (i.e., writing, speaking…)” (p. 71). As well, Yoshida’s (1998) participants stress their desire to focus on writing: “more English writing assignments in all university courses” (p. 72).

However, he also notes that many higher level students in the multi-level class appreciate a break rather than tutoring the lower level learners: “No, usually they work all the times. But sometime they also like use it as a break. Because they know if they like this, then we can also be like this. So, ya” (Interview 2); despite this, he confirms that often they waste time and then disrupt the class: “Yes, because when one person on the computer the other one works and then
the other one on the computers then the other one…” (Interview 2). On the other hand, Rame is an example of who Mark describes as a more advanced language learner who prefers to be left alone by the lower level peers: when she is asked about the lower level classmates asking for help on a regular basis, she says,

It would be tiring. Because like mmmm… also other classmates like they’re helping them they’re repeating, they keep on repeating that, and and sh sometimes they get mad because like they are out of patience. They think ahhh… so that’s maybe that’s why I maybe that’s that’s a reason sometimes I’m not really like want to help them much because I’m not really a I’m not that patient with all that. (Interview 2)

She continues to describe her frustration when she is in a group with lower level students:

Because like if you have a work then and we are out of time so so our so we wasted time explaining it to them. So instead of like doing it har fastly you have to like help them another so it’s kind of… I don’t know much about this… It’s kind of like you wasted time so much for them. So that’s it. (Interview 2)

In brief, she says, “Mmmm… because it’s it’s hassle” (Interview 3). She stresses that she is not the only advanced level who is tired of helping; she describes witnessing another advanced level student’s negative body language toward a lower level learner while explaining work:

Like mmmm… this girl when she talked like she said that ahhh… I don’t know… they’re speaking Russian so they said to so that’s why the girl they stand up and she ‘Do this and do that and you… ’ I don’t know what they’re talking about maybe but I looked at she, her expression is mad. Maybe I said it’s just mad. (Interview 2)

Moreover, she describes another higher level student who chooses to sit in another spot in the multi-level classroom so a lower level learner does not approach in search of help (Interview 3). Bell (1991) confirms this tension: “The more advanced students may feel that they are being held back and may become impatient with the beginners” (p. 12). Maddalena (2002) indicates that her higher level student is also resentful about assisting the lower level learners: ‘If we were not having mixed level class, I don’t need to be teacher”” (p. 5). Pham Phu (2007) lists that a disadvantage for higher level learners is that they may feel bored and discouraged. Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) highlight that educators should,

…explain the multi-level nature of the classes. This will help avoid problems later, such as frustration a student may experience when placed with students at a much lower English language proficiency level… A study of adult Latina students in New York found that some students cited multi-level class as a factor that deterred them from studying English (Buttaro, 2002). (p. 3)
Lower Level Students Discontent. Mark notes that the higher level students are not the only ones feeling tension, but also the lower level learners. He describes how they feel intimidated with their higher level peers: “The A are really uncomfortable because probably it’s their first year in Canada and they they kind of don’t find themselves and its take about couple of months until until they like landed and start to to to be natural again…” (Interview 1) He repeats this thought in his second journal: “I think it because they do not feel comfortable with students that can create a conversation with them” (Journal 2). Maddalena (2002) notes that a lower level learner “…fears that by continually asking for help from the more advanced students… that she will be responsible for monopolizing too much of the time. [The student] states: ‘I’ll feel much better or even motivated if there is at least one student like me’” (p. 5). Mark indicates that this makes it difficult for them to work in groups:

Yes, they… maybe because they are still in kind of the bubble, or they’re still thinking on their own country and their family… they don’t really aware of what’s of others or what’s they need to get done so they they don’t care if they will get bad mark or they will not get the assignment done so… I don’t know… they they are not here. They are still thinking of the past and on their own country I think. (Interview 2)

Since they are frustrated in the classroom, they often act out. Mark says that this occurs, “A lot. I think it was emmm… I think 50 to 60%” (Interview 2). Bell (1991) comments that teaching styles often clash from culture to culture and this makes it difficult for new students at the onset; some students struggle with work that is student-lead versus teacher-lead: “Not all students will find it easy to make the transition to taking active responsibility for their own learning, particularly those who come from cultures where education is essentially a passive process” (p. 15).

Homogeneous Grouping. Since there is occasional tension among the levels, both Mark and Rame comment that homogeneous classes run more smoothly. Mark recalls his time when he was in an ESL B class: “Emmm… it’s different…in the ESL B because it go more smoothly because everyone ap appox approximately in the same level…” (Interview 2). At this point, he values a homogeneous level class because it would prepare him better for a regular class:

Ehhh… yes, because then we will not slow down but we will not go too fast so it’s going to be OK for everyone and then we will get, we will be at the same pace for for every day. And we are not we are not we will not miss that but we will not we will not go too fast. (Interview 3)
In fact, Mark even suggests making homogeneous groupings within the multi-level setting. When he is asked about something he would like to see changed, he says, “...And maybe the arrangement of the class. To put all the ESL A and B in front because they need more help than the C, D, and E. So or to mix them around, or to put the the A in front” (Interview 3). Rame too states that she would prefer working with others who are at a similar level (Interview 3). In fact, if she had to choose between working with someone from her country versus someone at the same language ability level, she would choose the latter (Interview 3). Moreover, in the questionnaire, students show that they do not mind working with a multi-level group; however, it must be noted that they were only a point away from indicating that they do prefer a homogeneous group in the classroom. Yoshida (1998) also mentions that “mixing students of different language skills and levels of interest in the same class” is something that should be avoided in English language learner programs (p. 72). In addition, Balliro (1997) stresses that more homogeneous groupings may be needed to eliminate power struggles: “That is, group or pair the upper level students together and group or pair the lower level students together. That way, the lower levels may be willing to take more risks among themselves and the upper level students can move ahead more quickly” (p. 53).

Nature of ESL students’ participation in a multi-level classroom

This section highlights factors which enhance and limit Mark and Rame’s ability to feel a sense of belonging in a community of practice.

Factors which enhance students’ ability to belong to a community of practice

**Peers/Self.** After reviewing their responses to the questions based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) “legitimate peripheral participation” conceptual framework, overall Mark and Rame feel generally pleased with their ability to participate in the multi-level classroom. They also make several connections between what they do in the classroom and their ability to participate in the co-curricular and community activities.

They state that the basis for their happiness with their participation in the multi-level classroom is their high comfort level with oral communication. In the first interview, regarding his participation in the multi-level classroom, Mark states that from 1 to 6, he gives, “Ahh... 4” (Interview 1). Also, Rame gives a high ranking for her participation: “Mmmm... in the multi-level ESL class, it’s like I have to rate it 1 to 6? Mmmm... maybe 5” (Interview 1). Mark points out that he does not feel self-conscious when he speaks because “I know that people also make
mistakes in my level and they are not like quiet and sometimes laughing…” (Interview 1). He repeats this feeling in his third journal: “*My participation stayed high in the ESL multi-level classes. I am really confident in participating in multi-level because I feel that I can speak more freely and I am less afraid to make mistakes*” (Journal 3).

Rame says she feels happy with her participation because she is confident in her understanding of her peers’ conversations: “Mmmm… sometimes I understand what they say” (Interview 1). Since she easily participates, she is pleased that she receives recognition for her superior language ability from the lower level peers: “Because if I participate in class I get easily noticed like if I always like raise my hand I have the correct answer so maybe peo ahhh… people notice me like ahhh… she’s a really bright girl. So, ya, so” (Interview 2). However, as time has progressed she has gained so much confidence that she finds herself bored because she is not challenged by the work: “*In my GLS class, my participation drooped down because I’m not taking it seriously anymore because I’m busied myself chatting with friends*” (Journal 2). In the questionnaire, the higher level participants indicate that they feel welcomed by their peers and teachers in the multi-level classroom. Overall, Rame and Mark’s self-confidence has been gained through “activities requiring mutual engagement” which is a key part of Wenger’s (1998) infrastructure for educational engagement (p. 272).

Equally, both Mark and Rame feel moderately pleased with their participation in co-curricular activities and link what they do in the classroom to this positive experience. On a rating scale 1 to 6, Mark gives a 5 (Interview 1) while Rame is lower at a 3 due mainly to her family responsibilities (Interview 1). They agree that there is a link between their comfort with communicating in the classroom and their comfort with communicating in co-curricular activities. Mark explains this point:

Ehhh… I think yes. Ehhh… I think especially the language. I will I will not use I will not speak a lot in if I know if I don’t speak a lot of in regular classes, I will not speak a lot of in in ehhh… activities outside school with native speaker. And the same with the ESL student, if there will be an ESL student, I will speak more and participate b be more relaxed. (Interview 2)

He also mentions that if he feels welcomed by his peers in the multi-level classroom, then he is also confident in going to clubs with this peer group: “Ehhh… I think in the ESL and the clubs both of them are very welcoming, especially on the first day and for example in the Jewish club or in the Environmental club, they always were very welcoming” (Interview 3). In his third
journal, Mark emphasizes how a supportive classroom environment can help students be more confident for future endeavours both in and out of the classroom:

_Maybe if the teacher or even the students will support mentally by saying to the student ‘do not worry...you can do it!’ Then student will feel less pressure that creates to him self in his mind. After he or she faced their ‘fear’... or any other stress they will know that they can do it again and again, it is just matter of help them and support them at the first time._ (Journal 3)

Likewise, Rame states that if her friends from the multi-level class participate in co-curricular activities, then she is also confident to get involved:  “Mmmm… because I have my friends there so so I have I have a feeling it’s part of my ESL mmmm…” (Interview 2). Here she stresses that she sees her co-curricular involvement as part of her English language learning experience. Moreover, these feelings which show that being welcomed in the classroom extend to the co-curricular events are also strongly supported in the questionnaire:  it received the highest weighted score. Students feel confident to express themselves in extra-curricular events because of the camaraderie among their peer group fostered in their ESL classroom:  they describe happiness with their involvement in school activities. Mark and Rame indicate the value they place on the supportive nature of their peers; this shows that they feel a sense of unity with their fellow English language learners; this is indicative of their alignment (Wenger, 198, p. 274).

Mark feels a strong connection with his English-language-learner peers in the community because of their level of empathy with him as a newcomer; they imagine how the less advanced students feel and seek to support them in their learning; they share the common experience of learning to be more proficient in their speaking:  “Ummm… Also people that also they are ESL students or came from other country and also their personality if they are patient, it really helps and ya, if they are patient, it will really help me” (Interview 1). Also, in the questionnaire, advanced level participants highlight that there is a link between their happiness with their peer group and teacher in the multi-level classroom, and their happiness in the community.

**Cooperative Learning/Self.** Not with the same frequency as Archie, Bina and Natalie, but on occasion, Mark feels compelled to support the lower level classmates when he sees them struggling:  “…maybe 2, 2 times in a week. Five or 3 minutes that’s it” (Interview 3). Not only does he empathize with them, since he easily recalls his own struggles, but he also realizes that by supporting them, the class will progress faster:
Emmm… maybe also that the lesson will go more smoothly and we can go on. Because I also was in that situation on 1 year ago and that to show that they have support that they are not alone in the class and if they need help they just don’t can ask the teacher. They also can ask us. (Interview 3)

This means, that he benefits because he progresses as the lesson advances. Moreover, through speaking with them, his speaking will improve and his cultural knowledge will grow. Through this action, he sees that he supports his future self both with learning more material and practicing his communication skills.

Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self. Although Mark is a higher level, he still appreciates getting feedback on his speaking in class: “Because I really like to express my opinion and and also when I I’m involved in the conversation maybe I am more focused and it’s like a good feedback that I’m I am understand the materials and this stuff” (Interview 3). In his first journal, he comments on how important his speaking will be for the future: “In GLS I don’t care to read or to present, I even want to do it as much as possible, because to speak in front of people will makes it easier in the next time and my confidence level will get higher” (Journal 1). Bell (1991) affirms the value of the feedback through casual conversation from a diverse group of English language learners: “Students will also give each other important feedback about pronunciation and intelligibility, without the misleading effects of sharing the same accent” (p. 18). Also, Rame recognizes that she has gained confidence by mingling with others from different cultures in the multi-level class: “So, after that, mmmm… like I started to like talk to others. Ya oth other nationalities and outside outside of school I also try to talk to them and socialize. So that’s it and make friends on the outside so that’s it” (Interview 2).

Moreover, Rame values these opportunities to socialize in class with a wide variety of people and believes that her skills can be transferred to her co-curricular experiences: “Like making friends with other members of the club” (Interview 2). She lists group work as one activity (Interview 3) that helps her develop these social skills as well as “Ummm… playing games” (Interview 3). This affirms what Wenger (1998) stresses: “what they learn is what allows them to contribute to the enterprise of the community and to engage with others around that enterprise” (p. 271).

Similarly, Mark and Rame also see links between their participation in the multi-level classroom and their ability to interact in the community outside of school. Mark feels quite pleased with his participation; from 1 to 6, he says, “Ahh… 5, 4 to 5” (Interview 1). Rame feels
moderately pleased: “Mmmm… 3” (Interview 1). Mark also notes that he feels more relaxed in the community because he is not in an academic setting; this relaxed attitude enables him to practice his communication skills gained from the classroom: “…outside school for example I really like to volunteer and I don’t care if it’s native speaker around me or ESL students so I speak with them freely and having fun with them and in regular classes, it’s it’s more school or…” (Interview 2). On a similar note, Rame comments that her speaking skills from the classroom are directly linked to her ability to engage in communication outside of the school: “Ya. Talking. Like asking them like leads through this thing” (Interview 3). She acknowledges that the multi-level classroom serves as a safe place for her to practice her English (Interview 3), which then helps her feel confident with her language skills outside of the classroom: “Ya, because I practice my I can practice my my English” (Interview 3). She stresses that she speaks easily outside in the community with family friends: “Like ummm… I can easily communicate like communicate with my my mother’s friends like she had a friend like ummm… Canadians they speak English so I can easily communicate with them” (Interview 1). In the questionnaire, the higher level respondents also reveal contentment with their involvement in activities such as jobs and clubs in the community outside of community outside of school.

Factors which inhibit students’ ability to belong to a community of practice

Course Work. Regardless of their general feeling of being pleased with their participation in the classroom, both admit that there are moments when they are not pleased. Mark stresses that at all times, he feels comfortable with participating (Interview 1). Nevertheless, he also feels disconnected because he finds the work quite repetitive due to the need to repeat work for the lower level peers (Interview 3):

Because sometimes maybe it’s not that I don’t care, it’s I don’t feel interested to participate in the class and I have the conversations so I just you know listen to everything but stay quiet ahhh… maybe it’s like ehhh… I don’t know why. (Interview 3)

Since Mark feels this distance from the curriculum, he imagines ways in which he can be more engaged: he acts as a peer mentor who helps the lower level classmates; this supports Wenger’s (1998) imagination: “Educational imagination is also about not accepting things the way they are, about experimenting, and exploring possibilities, reinventing the self, and in the process reinventing the world” (p. 278). In addition, his willingness to work with the lower level students shows his desire to be united in their goals to succeed in their studies or in other words,
he is aligned with them. Likewise, initially, being a recent immigrant, Rame was slightly self-conscious about her speaking although she was admired by her lower level peers; however, by the third meeting, Rame states that her contentment with her participation has decreased from a 4 or 5 out of 6: “Now it becomes 3…” (Interview 3). She explains, “Ahhh… ya because I’m kind of bored and I’m I’m becoming lazy. So that’s why” (Interview 3). Rame concludes that it is she who drives her participation in the classroom (Interview 1). In the questionnaire, on two occasions, the advanced level participants call for the teacher to do more to increase their ability to participate in the classroom. Hence, by having similar work for different levels, engagement is limited. Wenger (1998) calls for activities that are meaningful to all (p. 271).

**Native Speakers-Language Barriers.** In terms of co-curricular activities, Mark admits that his participation is limited because occasionally, he feels timid with native-born Canadians (Interview 2). He explains, “…sometime if you need still to speak between friends that they are native speaker you still don’t feel comfortable…” (Interview 2); regardless, he has learned to compensate for this when he does not feel at ease speaking:

> Emmm… for example, we had a practice with the tennis team… so we don’t have to speak to have fun we can just come and play tennis and know that we have a tournament and we need to work together to win. And win it doesn’t involve any speaking just maybe to meet with the teacher but y y you don’t need to speak to have fun when the other guy also want to have fun. (Interview 2)

These feelings explain his desire to wish for continued speaking practice in groups in the multi-level classroom. Likewise, initially Rame was slightly self-conscious about her speaking around advanced English language learners or native speakers: “Mmmm… I’m a shy person and sometimes I feel really conscious about ummm… saying what a word like English if I had it ummm… I have the wrong grammar in it…” (Interview 1). In the questionnaire, like the middle level students, the advanced level participants also ask for more support from their teachers to help them engage in co-curricular activities.

When considering his participation in the community, Mark admits that his rating for his participation lowers if he is with non-immigrants: “… because if they are native speaker, it’s 4 and if it’s also ESL classes or immigrants, it’s 5 and not 6 because I don’t know…” (Interview 2). In the end, he relates this to his shyness. Moreover, he stresses that if he is with friends from multi-level classes, he feels content: the friendships made in these classes transfer outside of the classroom.
Rame changes her rating of 3 out of 6 for her participation in the community to a much lower rating because her friend was assaulted by some native speakers:

Actually, it’s ahh… I change it to 1. …because like I feel disappointed like I didn’t know like there are also gangs in here. Like I thought only in the Philippines because they are poor and they steal steal because they need money. Unlike here they they don’t really need that much money but but still they they mmmm… they steal… So that’s what I feel disappointed. So that’s it. (Interview 2)

Now, she has little desire to associate with others outside of her family or peer group from her multi-level classes because she is fearful. This gives more reason for her to wish for engagement with peers from a variety of cultural backgrounds; perhaps, her fear of mixing with different ethnicities could be alleviated.

**Employment.** Rame comments that although she is somewhat confident to participate, she is not likely to join co-curricular activities and this explains her rating of 3 out of 6 for her participation: “Ya, …but I’m not joining any clubs” (Interview 3). Her inactivity is mainly due to her need to work to support her family.

**ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom**

This section examines which factors increase and decrease Mark and Rame’s motivation.

*Factors which make students feel most motivated*

**Peers/Teacher/Self.** Mark and Rame’s responses to the questions based on the “Actional Phase” of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation show that they are moderately motivated in the multi-level classroom. Mark states on a rating scale of 1 to 6, “Ahhh… I think 3 because it’s more relaxed class but it’s also a little bit lazier class so or or less sequence or…” (Interview 1). Mark explains that the lower level learners impact the multi-level class by making it more relaxed because the pace is slow and the more advanced students often take on mentoring roles as siblings would do in a home; hence, the teacher allows for some “sense of autonomy.” This mentoring also helps them with their communication skills and exemplifies their ability to self-regulate. Moreover, this relaxed nature is a motivating influence on him:

*I do not get angry because we work slowly. I understand that the multi-level classes work a bit slower than regular classes so I think that we need to do our best, be patience, and try to find solutions. I defently do not want to leave this classroom because the ESL multi-level classes are like a big and relax family. We always want fun and not just work 😊.* (Journal 2)
Here, he comments on the empathy that students feel toward each other; they easily recall their own challenges. They also support their peers because they know that through this, their own learning will progress.

Initially, Rame feels fairly motivated because she gains confidence with her English; she has just arrived and needs the security of the ESL multi-level classroom: “Mmmm… about 4” (Interview 1). Like Mark, she lists her peers’ presence or “the influence of the learner group” in the multi-level class and her “teacher’s influence” as motivating factors because she feels safe to seek help: “In my GLS class, I feel excited because my friends are in there and I get motivated. I feel comfortable because I know that I have someone who I can ask help easily” (Journal 1).

Hess (2001) lists this collaborative spirit as one key factor in making a multi-level class function: “Everyone in the room is sometimes a student and sometimes a teacher, and students learn to carry a large slice of responsibility” (p. 10). When Rame reassures herself that she can be successful, she is pleased and feels more motivated: “One to 6? Motivation, now. Mmmm… maybe 5” (Interview 2). She measures this success by looking at her grades: “Because when Mr. Orellana like show me my my grades and I got 97 so I was really happy int in I will get flattered so I get motivated” (Interview 2). It can be said then that the “learner group,” including the teacher, do positively influence Mark and Rame’s motivation because they feel safe in their presence. Moreover, based on this, the “quality of [their] learning experience” is positive. In the questionnaire, the higher level participants also reveal that their peers willingly support each other. Moreover, they too stress that they are grateful for the individualized attention from their teacher and this helps them to feel positively about their classroom experience.

**Preference for Speaking in Groups/Self.** In addition, their preference for communicative activities in multi-level classroom that link them to the school community and Canadian society as a whole reflects their desire to engage in self-regulatory strategies which increase language learning and focus on goals. For example, Mark prefers activities requiring more interaction with peers and Canadian-born students: “More activities more activities between friends” (Interview 1). He wishes for his multi-level classroom peers and his fellow Canadian-born students to engage in activities so that they are more aware of different cultures. He sees that this will then break down the barriers of misconception and facilitate bonds among peers beyond the classroom:
Emmm… maybe to teach them sometimes about other cultures… or or to try to to give them the experience what what is to be immigrant and then maybe they will be more aware of others and they like it’s material to think about and then they will say, “Oh, we did this, we did this, we don’t have to do this. (Interview 2)

He continues to stress his desire for activities to integrate:

... show that you’re here and like you’re not stranger that they they will emmm… they will not think that we are strangers because we came from different country or we speak different language that they they will be with us the same as they with their Canadian friends. (Interview 2)

Rame briefly mentions the same hope for greater focus on interaction so that she can feel confident engaging with others beyond the classroom: “Like, if you study more English so that I can communicate with others, outside school” (Interview 1). As well, she would be more motivated if she had more opportunities to read which would increase her vocabulary and better her communication with native speakers (Interview 1). However, unlike Mark, she does not create roles for herself which encourage these opportunities. Therefore, the degree to which she self-regulates is lower than Mark’s self-regulation. In the questionnaire, like the lower level participants, the higher level participants prefer group work with peers who are at the same level; this increases their speaking opportunities.

Self. However, in the end, both acknowledge that they, themselves, drive their motivation which therefore highlights the significant role that self-regulation plays. For instance, Mark states that he is most motivated because of his inner feelings: “I think only myself because for example, in normal classes, I almost don’t speak with the teacher. If there’s really few times and most of the times, myself” (Interview 1). When asked what motivates her the most, Rame again refers to how she wishes to compete with others for grades: it is she who pushes herself to get high marks and enjoys the recognition: “Ya peers, because, you know, sometimes I feel that I am in compet…, in a competition, like, I compete with them. Like, having more scores. That’s all” (Interview 1). The questionnaire also indicates on two occasions that higher level participants self-motivate when faced with frustration in multi-level classes or when they are provided with opportunities to advance their studies.

Factors which make students feel least motivated

Course Work. In contrast, despite Marks’s positive feelings, he admits that the pace lags for him and it can be a demotivating factor: “Because everything goes slowly…Because
the lower levels they it's harder for them to understand so we need to wait them to understand” (Interview 1). He comments in his second journal that often he finds the work too repetitive: “In ESL classes usually I feel motivated; however, sometimes I do not feel motivated because I learn materials that I already learned... sometimes I get board” (Journal 2). This indicates that the “quality of [his] learning experience” is often negatively impacted too. As a result, Mark appreciates the faster pace of his regular classes because he believes that it prepares him for the future: in his first journal, he comments on this: “My motivation in regular classroom is higher than multi-level classroom... I think it is a good thing because it brings you into very efficient and hard work=positive tension...” (Journal 1). Like Mark, Rame also finds the class work too simple for her on occasion and links this frustration to her lack of motivation:

_In my GLS class, I’m not that also motivated because for me I find it really easy so I just take it easy and that’s why I feel sometimes that I don’t want to be in this class. But sometimes, I like to be in this class because I have my friends there and I feel like I’m not alone_ (Journal 2).

**Skill Barrier.** Rame also feels demotivated when she is not able to participate in something because she lacks ability in that activity: she mentions that it is not just about her language skills, but also her lack of other skills. She cites playing sports as an example: “Ya. Because I’m not really good at it sometimes. If my team didn’t for example we’re playing hoops, we’re playing basketball they don’t pass it to me they pass it to others. So I’ll be like, “OK. You don’t want me to play. OK.” (Interview 3). Unlike Mark who uses his other skills to compensate for his lack of language ability, Rame faces challenges with language and other skills such as physical coordination. She does not self-regulate to improve her motivation.

**Frustrated with Lower Level Students.** When Mark and Rame are asked what motivates them the least, they mention that the immature attitude of the lower level classmates toward work really demotivates them. This stresses that as much as the “learner group” is a positive for them because it is supportive and non-judgmental of their language proficiency, it is also negative when students do not behave properly and impede their learning. Mark comments how students do not take the course work seriously: “They know it’s more relaxed and an example, after lunch we go to play football so I know it doesn’t really matter if I’m going to be late” (Interview 1). He wishes the teacher were more demanding of them:

…I don’t tell tell him what to do but they maybe they go too much in the teachers’ work. If ever teacher will be more in charge or more strict with them, that because I think
they think that the teacher in ESL class is is some of the ESL classes, it’s more friends than a teacher. (Interview 2)

In the first observation, it is clear that Mark is a serious student who strives to do his best and who wishes for peers who are equally motivated: “Mark sits at the front. He makes eye contact with the teacher and clearly listens. It is obvious that he is focused on the task at hand. He does not talk to anyone while the teacher is talking. When the lower level peers are disruptive, he stares at them patiently” (Observation 1). Similarly, Rame dislikes working on group projects because she feels that everyone who is a lower level student jokes around and leaves her to do all the work for the group; she prefers to use less energy and divide the work evenly among the group members: “Mmmm… Sometimes the activities. Because I am not really, I am a lazy person. Honestly. And, I don’t do things like having a project, like that. I don’t really like it. That’s all. (Interview 1).

It is interesting to note that when asked what would make them feel more motivated, Mark and Rame again list their peers’ behaviour as an influence: they want them to be more serious so more material can be covered. They wish to progress and feel thwarted in their ability to do so; hence, in this case, the learner group negatively impacts them. Mark wishes for the students to be better behaved so that the class could progress more smoothly: He is irritated by their lack of concentration on their studies and he feels the pressure to cover as much work as possible in order to prepare for regular classes.

Maybe simple stuff like not to speak when the teacher speak and when the teacher ask quiet to be quiet or or maybe the noise to to be more quiet like and to get only the small stuff that that we need to listen to the teacher then and then I think you’ll have more smoothly and we will get more things done. (Interview 2)

Again, he stresses that he wants to progress with his studies and the behaviour of the lower level learners often holds that progression back: “Emmm… maybe to give more more work that that will full the time that people will will not have time to play. Just to to have total work and not playing around” (Interview 2). He mentions that he does not want the teachers to accommodate the lower level students when deadlines have already been established for assignments or tests. He feels this because he believes that when he is finished his ESL courses, he will not receive this type of accommodation (Interview 1). He wants to be prepared for the rigorous nature of the regular courses. In fact, in his second journal, he suggests a new seating pattern to address the inappropriate behaviour of the lower level peers:
I have an idea that maybe we can try: the sitting arrangement will be done by the teacher. He/she will put the lower levels and higher levels. Then, maybe will have more challenge and less talking and less careless. They will not talk with each other, they will have a good example from the higher students. (Journal 2)

Rame too wishes for peers with whom she feels more connected: “My friends, like, if I have friends lot. Like in my classroom, all of my friends were were were my mmmm… close friends, I will be motivated” (Interview 1). She prefers to be surrounded by like-minded peers who have the similar goals and who do not ask her to do their work when they are behind. Hess (2001) suggests that incorrect pacing can be one cause of the students’ poor behaviour: “we can lose control and make our students either bored or frustrated, and in a large multi-level class such students become troublemakers and distract even the most fastidious and most motivated” (p. 9).

It is for this reason that Mark in particular engages in peer mentoring which clearly shows his attempt to increase his speaking and the pace of the class. This is a clear example of a self-regulatory strategy.

ESL students’ identity formation and development vis-à-vis their degree of participation in a multi-level classroom

This section gives light as to how Mark and Rame see themselves in the classroom, in the school community, and outside of the school community. The labels or roles which they attribute to themselves are also identified.

Students’ perception of themselves in the classroom/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

In general, Mark sees himself as a confident and happy student in the multi-level classroom while Rame views herself as both happy and sad. Mark’s confidence stems from the ease with which he navigates his course work: “Ummm… I’m really confident and know the materials” (Interview 1). Mark’s happiness is derived from his appreciation of interacting with his multicultural peer group: “And also much better because we have different cultures and it’s really interesting to get to know their cultures and not to just sit and study” (Interview 1). He recognizes the future benefits of being able to work with a diverse group of people which strengthens his ability to achieve the family goal of integration. Also, he is pleased with his relationship with his ESL teachers and admits that it is better than with teachers of “native speaker classes” (Interview 1). In fact, he likens his role with his peers and teachers to that of a family member: “…I really like this class because it’s it’s it’s more than a class. It’s more like a
family or more a happy place to be. So, I would not give up on that class” (Interview 3). In the questionnaire, higher level participants underscore the team spirit among their peers where people feel comfortable asking for help from one another. Since he feels confident, he also identifies himself as a “leader” who directs the lower level students within the multi-level classroom: “Ahhh… I think leader because a lot of students are a little bit lazy. For example, we have projects in GLS and they don’t work really hard. You need to, to regroup them all the times and to get them work” (Interview 1). He repeats this sentiment in his first journal: “**In ESL classes, I am a leader. For instance, we had to write scripts for GLS class. I got my team to get started, otherwise they would work only day before it’s due**” (Journal 1). By assuming this role, he highlights his alignment with his English language learner peers in their struggle to succeed in their new country.

Likewise, Rame feels quite pleased with her ESL teacher and her ease at completing work:

> Ummm… happy because you know ummm… our teacher is very friendly and I can easily ask questions with and he just answer that’s right. He just help us as ummm… for example, we have an activity she wrote we can easily ask her him to help us and she and he give examples so we can be informed. (Interview 1)

She increasingly feels confident because she recognizes her ability to communicate well with her friends:

> Ummm… confident. Because you know my friend… level level D ummm… she understand me. We can speak English directly because you know I just came here just few weeks ago and and this en if she if it’s your first time you cannot e you cannot easily direct it. (Interview 1)

In addition, her confidence also grows from the fact that she is quite capable of doing the course work: “**Mmmm… it’s a little bit easy for me because (The participant laughs)…**” (Interview 1). Even though Rame explains that she is happy, she feels sadness too. She feels mixed emotions because of her involvement with her lower level peers:

> Mmmm… sometimes I’m happy, sometimes I’m sad because you know ummm… if we have a group activity like I have to you know I have to do ummm… do things like others don’t if they. The example, our other groups like they have ummm… they speak English very well and they and in our group, ya we have different ummm… like the others doesn’t speak English and I have to like really ask them how what they what sh they do what should they do like and everything else ya. (Interview 1)
Although she acknowledges that when she helps others in groups she acts as a “leader” (Interview 1), she identifies more with being a “follower” (Interview 1). That is why she feels unhappiness in group work: she feels forced to play a role which is uncomfortable for her: “Ya. Because I’m I’m not really into leadership like I because you feel if you’re a leader you have to do like the other work like you have much more of this responsibility. So, I am not really into it” (Interview 1). In her first journal, she describes her role: “…I prefer to be a follower. I become a leader if my group members don’t know much more about the activity and I take the responsibilities as a leader” (Journal 1). Therefore, Rame does not feel the same sense of responsibility as Mark and with this, she does not feel to the same extent the “family” member role. She invests herself less and gives less input to others because she has just arrived.

Students’ view of themselves in the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

Mark and Rame both indicate that some of their feelings and roles in the multi-level classroom transfer into the school community; however, overall, they feel less positive and more limited in their roles when they involve themselves with native speakers. For example, Mark feels content when he interacts with his English language learner peers. In his first journal, he describes himself as “relax, happy have fun with friends, have good relationship with teachers and having fun in clubs” (Journal 1). In contrast, he feels lonely on occasion because he believes that he is not able to break the barriers he feels with making Canadian-born friends; most of his friends are English language learners from his multi-level classes and he wishes to expand his horizons:

Happy, but also a little bit lonely because the I’m going always al always with only the immigration. The the Canadian not really interested in you and sometimes, they don’t say you to you hello even they your ahhh… period the last period you are with them. So, it’s kind of separating the immigration and the Canadians. (Interview 1)

Although now he feels mainly happy in the school outside of the multi-level classroom, he recalls that this loneliness was most pronounced upon his arrival: “Ummm… I really like them, but sometimes for for example, in grade 9, I just came I didn’t go to any activity because I was very shy. Cause I was lonely and I I was scared a little bit” (Interview 1). Also, since Mark has mixed in co-curricular activities where there have been native speakers, he feels intimidated by his communication: “…because I didn’t have a way to communicate so I I I thought about what would happen if… and then then it really affect my confidence so I didn’t know even it if for
something I would have fun I didn’t have the confidence to go in and and to be involved” (Interview 2).

On a similar note, Rame feels happy when she is surrounded by her peers from her first language culture and wishes to be involved with them in activities although her family duties sometimes limit her ability to do so; again, this stresses her connection to her peers whereby they desire to improve their communication skills and their sense of belonging in the school. “Happy because you know I already ummm… joined a club and my friends are there also. So that’s it I’m happy…” (Interview 1). Her teachers help to maintain this happiness because she feels their genuine warmth with her: “…I get really confident because you know they they actually give us some ummm… for example we ask them something like they really make us understand what what is it” (Interview 1). In the questionnaire, higher level participants also acknowledged that they have a lot to offer with regard to co-curricular activities. Regardless of her happiness with her peer group, when Rame is around native speakers, like Mark, she is timid:

Unconfident. Mmmm… because I’m new here and how to say? I’m new here and I can’t easily make friends and because I’m shy sometimes ummm… you know I only make friends with May, fellow Filipinos. But I don’t usually much make friends with foreigns ya that’s… (Interview 1)

She stresses her timid nature and the pressure she feels to perfect her language skills when she is in the presence of native speakers:

Shy. Because ummm… in my English I actually don’t speak ummm… like I can easily I cannot easily say that I I speak it like correctly and because of that like ummm… for them they can easily communicate with others because you know we study English for them just like to talk to them ya that’s all (Interview 1).

Given his insecurity around native speakers, when Mark considers his role in co-curricular events, he calls himself a helper rather than a leader as he is in the multi-level classroom: “Ahhh… I think helper. Because most of the people I met outside are are native speakers or ESL but they are a long time in Canada so I only help and and don’t lead them” (Interview 1). He continues to explain: “Because… because of the native speaker I don’t feel comfortable to go and speak and say my own ideas and said each one of them what to do. So…” (Interview 2). However, he does affirm his leadership in the multi-level classroom does transfer to other contexts; regardless, he acknowledges that these contexts are more challenging for him because of his language proficiency:
Sometimes yes because it’s very similar but sometimes no because it’s not the same interaction that I have outside school. Outside outside of school is is more speaking and really take maybe not harder leadership but more complicated leadership because here I just can explain them and they will say yes even if they don’t understand it so. Outside no no not really. (Interview 3)

Yet, when he is involved in co-curricular activities with his peers he feels positively. He recognizes they all desire to improve their communication skills and their sense of belonging in the school and he supports them as much as he can. Moreover, he leads a club for English language learners which parallels his leadership in the classroom.

Rame claims that because of her insecurity with her language proficiency, she prefers that the native speakers help the other English language learners in regular classes or in the school: “Still follower. Because you know … Canadian-born they speak English so if there is an ESL A level there they can actually ask from the Canadian-born” (Interview 1). In her first journal, she states that sometimes she feels like “a loner, out of place…” (Journal 1). At times, she writes in her second journal “I see myself in school as a lazy, dependent, and an ordinary student because I’m not getting serious at school because I’m getting discourage cause they put me back in high school that I supposed I to be in college now” (Journal 2). Despite her hesitancy with her language, she affirms that when she feels competent in her English language proficiency, she will be “A leader. That’s it” (Interview 1). These comments show how Rame’s own attitude is the greatest factor which determines her feeling positively in this context.

Students’ image of themselves outside of the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

In the community outside of the school, Mark feels extremely happy with his family (Interview 1) and his peers from the multi-level classroom or in co-curricular activities (Interview 1); his friendships from the multi-level classroom continue in the community which demonstrate their sense of alignment. In his first journal, he reports, “Outside school I see my self more relax and comfortable in places with other immigrant” (Journal 1). Yet, at times he is disappointed that he cannot see them more frequently so that their friendship can develop: “Ahhh… a little bit lonely because in Israel it’s not easy to to make friends outside school and to go with them out and here it’s more officially and you need t to set up an appointment with friends and to go out a couple of days before and errr… a little bit more heavier than in Israel. In Israel everything it’s light…” (Interview 1). Overall, he describes his life outside of school as
positive: “Ahhh… I think very happy because outside of school I’m more confident or easy
going or less shy… Ummm… Maybe there is less pressure of the school or your your head is
more clean from the school…” (Interview 1). In contrast, since she has just arrived, Rame is not
happy: she is very sad because of her language proficiency, her family situation, and her
isolation from her peer group. For example, she explains her frustration with her need to
rehearse what she says before she speaks and it is for this reason she appreciates her speaking
opportunities in the multi-level classroom: “Mmmm… Sad. Because like mmmm… taking a
bus when I take a bus mmmm… there’s I when I speak to the driver where where he can drop me
get off in that mmmm… I sometimes ahhh… don’t know I always think what to say first before I
say it…” (Interview 1). Likewise, she feels miserable about her living conditions:

Mmmm… I feel sad in their in part of my parents like my Dad wasn’t here he I was like
he was in the Philippines and my Mom she’s here like she’s like I’m kind of you know
I’m kind of sad because you had a broken family and and my Mom has another man and I
just don’t like it. I don’t. That’s all. (Interview 1)

Moreover, her peer group from school, who brings her confidence, sees very little of her outside
of school and this makes Rame feel isolated: “Mmmm… I actually don’t communicate much
and like I don’t actually call them my friends. That’s all. I just…” (Interview 1). She feels
obligated to help her family survive as newcomers: outside of school, her primary focus is to
find a job: she has barely arrived and her mother is searching for a place of employment for
Rame: “Like working? I’m not yet working right now but my Mother is planning to apply us…”
(Interview 1). Hence, her alignment is stronger to her family’s goals than her peers’ goals. In
the questionnaire, higher level respondents see themselves as very important in the community
outside of school because of their work or involvement in a club or organization.

Regardless of the security Mark feels with his family and English language learner
friends, he is a helper when he is with native speakers in the community outside of school; he
does not have the confidence to be a leader at this point: “Ya because again the native speaker
you don’t feel comfortable to speak and tell them what to do or to have suggestion” (Interview
2). He describes his awkwardness with native speakers in his first journal: “…But in places
without immigrant less confidence, more tenntion... because it is hard to get together with
native speaker and I feel that something is missing” (Journal 1). It is interesting that when asked
about his feelings and roles in the community, Mark focuses only on his preoccupation with
native speakers; this could be indicative of his anxiety about aligning himself with Canadian
society which is the whole point of his family’s immigration. Similarly, Rame focuses on her role of a follower when she considers her interaction in the community with native speakers: “Ummm… follower. Because ummm… I ummm… I’m new here and I don’t much, I don’t know much about the place so I need to like follow just follow them the one who knows a lot. And that’s all” (Interview 1). Despite this, she claims that once she is better aware of her environment she will lead; although she does not acknowledge this, she already shows herself as a leader by taking responsibility for her family’s well-being and working in mainstream society. Like Mark, her alignment to her family’s goals is also notable.

Mark and Rame show limited “identification” and “negotiability” in the multi-level classroom in all three modes of belonging. Their investment of themselves is limited. Since the work is too simplistic, they frequently feel that they need to be challenged more although they do appreciate the nurturing of their peers and teacher (engagement). They seek to make connections for themselves in roles beyond the classroom yet they feel their ability is thwarted because their ability to imagine can be impeded by the limited work environment and the lower level classmates’ behaviour (imagination). They share common goals with their peers yet they wish commence their alignment with their native speaker peers in order to better share in their family’s goals (alignment).

Similarly, their negotiability is limited in the multi-level classroom. Often they feel they are underachieving which means their input is limited; even so, Mark recognizes that his input for his peers is beneficial (engagement). As well, they cannot draw from the lower level students’ experiences to the same degree that the lower level learners draw from theirs, although they still make links as to how they may handle new experiences through the shared experiences of others (imagination). Finally, they actively take part in shaping the shared goal formation of their peers and family through persuading or advising. Yet, they are doing most of the persuading and shaping compared to their lower level peers; they give hope to the lower level classmates (alignment) (Wenger, 1998, p. 190).

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

Like the other English language learners, Mark and Rame’s responses to questions about their participation and motivation in the multi-level classroom show similarities. In their case, they feel mixed emotions around their participation and motivation. Once again, it is not unexpected that there are parallel answers considering that “Legitimate Peripheral Participation”
is a concept which recognizes how participants’ motivation is impacted “...vis-à-vis their changing participation...” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 56) which then influences identity formation and development. Ultimately, then, students’ feelings about their participation and motivation are intertwined and influence identity formation and development.
Dear Colleagues,

Teaching a multi-level class is very challenging to organize and administer. Often, I feel pressured to have different lesson plans but I know that is not realistic for me to prepare. I feel this pressure because the lower levels often struggle while the higher levels finish their work quite quickly. This feeling of not being able to address everyone’s needs can be exhausting. I think I would have to teach the course several times before I would feel able to meet everyone’s needs. I cannot imagine teaching a multi-level class that is a prerequisite class for the next year’s class like math. There is too much cutting curriculum for that.

My relationship with the English language learners is a special one that often extends beyond the curriculum: I am someone who shows interests in their challenges as newcomers to Canada. Overall, I know that they see me as someone who is non-threatening and safe. Even so, at times, when I am teaching, it feels like a three-ring circus. I am constantly circulating trying to meet everyone’s needs; however, I must admit that the lower levels take most of my time either for getting help or for calming them down. Yet, occasionally, the more advanced levels also get rowdy. If I weren’t so flexible and easy-going, teaching this class would definitely lead to burnout. It helps if you explain to the students that the class is a bit different because it’s multi-level.

So, I encourage that when the higher levels finish quickly, they can support the lower levels as tutors because very often the more advanced students feel empathy for the less advanced. They have been in their shoes. Everyone benefits from this experience. Still, that does not always work because not everyone wants to be a peer mentor. I also urge the lower levels to just do their best but at times that upsets them when they don’t finish something. The lower levels often find the work too difficult so they can disengage. Similarly, some higher levels get annoyed with the work because of the simplicity and they too disengage!

In addition to supporting their peer mentoring roles, I also encourage them to make links with what we do in the class to outside of the class in order to avoid this disengagement. This is another way of self-motivating. For example, I try to do a lot of speaking activities because I know that they can see how this is beneficial for them beyond the classroom. Also, I create work around multicultural activities so that students can develop an appreciation for living in a multicultural society. Therefore, I would say that an overall focus in what I do in the classroom directly links to the world beyond the classroom. Some students can make those links and stay on task. Others do not. In any case, I think the class would benefit from being divided into more lower/intermediate groupings and intermediate/advanced groupings with continued opportunities for cooperative learning.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Orellana

(A summary of Mr. Orellana’s responses approved by Mr. Orellana)

Portrait of Mr. Orellana

Background

Mr. Orellana was born in Scotland. He came to Canada in 1967 at 3 years old. He is married with three children. He speaks English or in his words, “a dialect of Scottish-English”, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. He identifies more with Canadian culture than Scottish culture. Having lived abroad in Latin America, he feels a strong affinity to that culture as well. His post-secondary studies include a year of Engineering, a degree in Linguistics and Anthropology and a Bachelor of Education. He is TESL trained and has ESL Part 1
qualifications. He has been teaching since 1993. In Latin America, he taught English as a Foreign Language and music to a wide range of students including adults. In addition, he has worked for LINC and a private school. He has been a public high school teacher for the last 3 years. Moreover, he is active in ESL professional development. His coaching interests include wrestling, soccer, music, and ESL clubs. At school, he dresses casually and portrays himself as a calm, caring, soft-spoken, and dedicated teacher.

Classroom

Mr. Orellana’s classroom behaviour is consistent over the observation period. He begins his lessons with an agenda on the board. Occasionally, he allows students to write the agenda on the board. He then reviews the daily plan. When students chat during his explanation, he does not comment on their speaking. In addition, when he questions them in preparation for their work, students randomly shout out the answers without waiting for him to call upon them. Moreover, when he assigns something and students do not like the quantity of work, they openly complain. They feel free to express their feelings with him. After his explanation of the work, which often includes defining difficult vocabulary, students are expected to work independently or in small groups on an assignment. There were two exceptions in observation one and two when there were two full-class participation assignments: a sing-song and a game. Often students hand out books or assignments if needed. His assignments tend to be the same for all language ability levels with the exception of a homework assignment in the first observation where the lower level students were to write less than the more advanced level learners. The typical pattern is that Mr. Orellana circulates through the room for the entire period. He gives many students individual attention; however, the lower level students dominate his time due to their need for clarification and their frequent disruption. They do not always remain in their seats and on three occasions, they kick each other or a soccer ball, play on a computer, or sing out loud. The middle and higher level learners tend to work quietly with little assistance; however, once they have finished their work, there is little for them to do unless they choose to help someone or do homework from other classes. Higher level students on average have up to 30 minutes of free time in each class. In one observation, the lower level learners needed 70 minutes to finish an activity, while the higher level students took 10 minutes. Often, the higher level learners begin to roam around the room. Mr. Orellana has to ask them to focus. He cannot always reach all students who need help. He is stretched too thinly. By the end of the class,
most students have already packed their bags and wait to go. Mr. Orellana sometimes writes or orally gives the homework.

*Questionnaire Responses-Teachers*

Out of 40 teacher participants, 25 fully completed the online questionnaire. In Table 6 below, the 21 questions indicate the highest weighted score for all teachers. Given the high teacher participation, some significance can be given to their responses in comparison to Mr. Orellana, the ESL teacher. Significant responses will be noted throughout the chapter.

**Table 6: Online questionnaire responses-teacher participants.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Questionnaire Questions</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) If students do not feel welcomed by their peers and teacher in their classes that have students from different levels of English, then they also may not feel welcomed in the school community.</td>
<td>11 9 5</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) If students are in classes that have students from different levels of English, students are sometimes afraid to raise their hand to join in on discussions.</td>
<td>7 10 7 1</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) If students do not feel welcomed by their peers and teacher in their classes with different levels of English, then they also may not feel welcomed in the community where they live.</td>
<td>6 11 6 2</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Students prefer working with students who have the same level of English.</td>
<td>5 9 7 2 2</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) In the classes that have students from different levels of English, the teacher helps students feel positively about their classroom experience.</td>
<td>4 10 8 1 2</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) When there are classes with different levels of English, the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.</td>
<td>3 10 9 3</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) When students are in classes that have students from different levels of English, some students feel nervous to speak because they fear other students at different levels may laugh at them.</td>
<td>5 9 8 3</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) When students participate in group-work activities, in classes that have different levels of English, students prefer working with students who are at the same level.</td>
<td>6 8 6 3 2</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Teachers are not available to provide students with the time they need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.</td>
<td>5 8 8 2 2</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Sometimes students from multi-level classes wait a long time to get help from me because I am too busy helping others.</td>
<td>6 8 7 4</td>
<td>112</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11) When students are in classes with other students from different levels of English, they are able to ask for help from the other students.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Students would like extra help from the teacher to help increase their participation in the classes that have students from different levels of English.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) In the classes with students who have different levels of English, students would like extra help from the teacher so that students could increase their participation in the co-curricular activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) There is often cooperation among students in classes that have students from different levels of English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) When I think about my classes with different levels of English, sometimes some students find the work too easy because I cannot address everyone’s academic needs.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) I think that multi-level classes make it difficult for the teacher to meet all of the students needs because some students often feel unchallenged by the work.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) When thinking of the students from classes with different levels of English, I am happy with students’ participation in co-curricular activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) If students from multi-level language ability classes are involved in a co-curricular activity such as clubs, sports, music, and drama, they are able to say what they think when they talk in a group.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) There are times when students feel angry because the other students take the teacher time and they are left waiting and feeling bored.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) When I think of the school, students can participate in co-curricular activities such as clubs, sports, music, and drama because they get lots of support from their teachers in the classes with students who have different levels of English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter addresses the four main research questions with regard to the teacher. Like the other participants, Mr. Orellana’s responses to questions based on the two models are similar and hence, it suggests that they can be linked.

**Nature of the teacher’s overall experience in a multi-level classroom with regard to the multi-level language groupings literature**

This section looks at Mr. Orellana’s experience in a multi-level classroom with reference to his course material, his students, and his understanding of the ESL students’ relationship with each other.

**Nature of the ESL subject teacher’s/students’ experience with his course material in a multi-level classroom**

**Challenging Lesson Preparation.** When Mr. Orellana examines his feelings toward the course material, Mr. Orellana views the course material as challenging to organize and to administer. Bell (1991) stresses that when administrators create the multi-level class, they certainly do not focus on the challenges, but rather its cost-savings: “Setting up a multi-level class relieves them of the obligation to …provide extra classes” (p. 8). Bell (1991) continues to point out that “there is no doubt that a multi-level class makes heavy preparation demands on the teacher” (p. 13). In fact, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) urge that “administrators should familiarize themselves with the challenges of teaching multi-level classes so that they can offer appropriate support to teachers. Planning and teaching multi-level classes places a burden on the teacher, who must dedicate extra time to class preparation and extra effort to classroom management” (p. 4). In terms of the preparation, often Mr. Orellana feels pressured to create different evaluation tools to accommodate all levels; however, he knows that is not realistic. He mentions one occasion when he felt like he needed to create five different rubrics to evaluate the multi-level students:

Right. Ummm… it it can be frustrating and overwhelming ummm… …there’s limitations on your time and on the materials available and for the next time I mean not kill yourself not overdo it but ummm… try to incorporate a little bit of of those ideas into your next sort of planned assignment or project whatever… (Interview 2)

Bell (1991) highlights that assessment is often badly neglected in multi-level classrooms: “Largely it is because of the difficulty of devising an evaluative instrument suitable for students with such varied backgrounds, skills, and goals” (p. 12). Also, the teacher feels he should have multiple activities, in case some of the more advanced finish sooner than the lower level peers:
But if it were ummm... multi-level like a GLS kind of course, ummm... the As and Bs would typically finish ahhh... if it’s a longer kind of thing... 15 to 20, 25 minutes they typically finish 10 to 15 minutes later than the rest. So I’d have to come up with like a mini-extended activity. Maybe it would mean write a reflection on something whatever. But that’s also something extra to mark because I wouldn’t have time to go through it in class so I’d have to think about OK how am I going to fit this into my marking schedule? Am I going to have one of these every single day? Every other day to add? So...

(Interview 3)

Yet, he has not figured out how he would manage these activities. Similarly, in his journal, he describes how he must alter their resources in order to accommodate the needs of the lower level students: “...Sometimes some of the learning strategy booklets were too difficult for anyone below level C or D. When such was the case, I would create an abridged form of the booklet to give as an additional handout” (Journal 1). Again, in his second journal he comments on the need to adapt material: “Since my last journal entry, I have had some problems with the material – specifically, with the handout for writing strategies” (Journal 2). Maddalena (2002) underlines the challenges an educator can have trying to create work that is suitable for all levels: “…trying to choose and prepare material suitable for both the higher and lower level students successfully proved to be difficult” (p. 3). Likewise, Shank and Terrill (1995) describe the difficulties planning for a mixed ability classroom: “Planning for multi-level classes requires the ability to juggle many different elements as teachers must provide activities that address the learning styles, skill levels…” (p. 3).

As a result of these challenges, he stresses that the preparation can be exhausting: “Ya absolutely ya. There’s there’s a point at which you feel you know the wind going out of your sails because you know sometimes you either want to do it perfectly or not at all” (Interview 2). Pham Phu (2007) also mentions how preparation is tiring for the teacher of the multi-level classroom: “Teachers have to do more work for class management and teaching material preparation. The result is the planning is often time-consuming” (p. 308). Moreover, he imagines the difficulty in preparing for a multi-level class which is a prerequisite for the next year’s class; the pressure to prepare the adequate amount of material would be much greater. He considers a math class for example:

Well, you’d have to prepare the curriculum and then you’d have to simplify according to level and then you would have to look through it for any troubling vocabulary and come up with a plan for how to do that. Then you’d have to come up with a plan for how to for the different levels teach the concepts first they might already have from their from their
Given these challenges, he figures that when he prepares the work for a multi-level classroom, he cuts out a significant portion of the curriculum: “It would simply be an eyeball guess at the moment I’d have to kind of go over ahhh… an eyeball guess ahhh… and from approximate guess I’d have to look at the curriculum again in compared to what I’ve done ummm… maybe 20%. As a total guess…” (Interview 2). Furthermore, he acknowledges that this would be disastrous in courses which act as prerequisites for other courses: “…But then there’s that pressure to make sure that your students who graduated out of your class have got the knowledge and the ability to ummm… continue on to the next level” (Interview 3). He stresses that, unlike adult ESL courses which have flexibility, secondary school ESL courses have a prescribed curriculum which puts more pressure on the teacher to adhere to a prescribed curriculum: “…I’m thinking of ummm… an ESL adult kind of setting which is different. Ya the curriculum is way more flexible and you repeat levels as need be. Ya, it doesn’t work that way” (Interview 3). Hence, this highlights the great pressure a secondary school teacher feels in a multi-level class. In fact, Bell (1991) says that flexibility is the one advantage of the multi-level classroom and in this context, that is clearly not the case.

Mr. Orellana concurs that teachers need to teach a multi-level class several times in order to feel adequately prepared to address the needs of the multiple levels:

Mmmm… very very difficult. It’s the kind of thing that you might if you were to teach that course once a semester it might take 3 or 4 years of sort of piece meal to get to the point where you would have a system in place. But it would take like several years maybe teaching the course six or seven or eight times. Ummm… to expect somebody to have that after the first time they’ve taught the course mmmm… you’d be a mess. You’d have no social life, no home life, no family life. (Interview 3)

Bell (1991) emphasizes that when a teacher first works in a multi-level setting it can be overwhelming: “Teachers working with such a class for the first time are likely to find themselves putting in disproportionate amounts of preparation time, although they will certainly find that the effort put into materials development will pay off for future classes” (p. 13).

**Challenging Lesson Administration.** The preparation is not the only difficult aspect for Mr. Orellana, but also the administration of the material mainly due to classroom management.
challenges. The metaphor which he uses to describe his teaching in the multi-level classroom is a “three-ring circus.” When asked what percentage of the time he feels this, he says, “I would say about 80% of the time” (Interview 3). Hess (2001) confirms that this is indeed a challenge of the multi-level classroom: “Classroom management becomes a formidable obstacle that must be overcome before we can even begin to think about real teaching” (p. 4). On a similar note, Office of Refugee Resettlement (1982) comments multi-level classes are “…often an exasperating situation for both teachers and students” (p. 6). Valentic (2005) echoes this point: “The teacher should overcome the obstacle of classroom management. Some teachers can function in a kind of work chaos in the classroom while others look for perfection. The teacher should never let things in the classroom get out of control” (p. 2). Occasionally, he feels down on himself because he cannot satisfy everybody’s needs in the room:

Ya, sometimes it does. I mean trying to ahhh… you know the thing that’s positive about it is that I feel like I’m I I’m having some positive effect a lot of students have commented that they feel they’ve improved in their other courses because of this course ummm… which is one of the ultimate goals of this course. Ummm… but ya it’s it’s never fully feel that you’ve you can satisfy anybody no matter what you do on a given day. It can be, it can be frustrating for sure. (Interview 3)

In fact, he describes how is energy is depleted in a multi-level classroom: “The amount of energy required during class to sort of stay focused and juggle everything is I I am more exhausted at the end of class ummm… typically then a normal class” (Interview 3). On another occasion, he repeats this sentiment: “Depends on the day but always at least 75% empty sometimes 100%…” (Interview 3). This contrasts to other non-ESL classes where he is only 25% drained. Hess (2001) cautions that there is a great deal of sacrifice with this type of environment: “…the stresses and strains of dealing with a great many people and pressures every day have a way of wearing us down…” (p. 7). Similarly, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) point out difficulties for the teacher of multi-level classes: “…addressing the diverse needs of a multi-level class presents challenges for the teacher and requires a) training, experience, and extra time for preparing lessons and materials…” (p. 2).

It is for that reason he would very much appreciate a teaching assistant:

I think ummm… would sometimes run activities, would monitor activities, might teach a little bit ummm… would be with the the group that I wasn’t focused on and and sort of vice versa. I think a lot of it would be just helping them through activities so I would set up a project or a group activity and then they would just ahhh… well I’d… (Interview 2)
Bell (1991) too advises that teachers of multi-level classes “will still be wise to explore all possible avenues of support, such as enrolling teacher’s aides or asking for volunteers…” (p. 13). On a similar note, Mathews-Aydinli and Van Horne (2006) suggest that there be “… the additional support of tutors and teacher aides” (p. 3). He explains that to avoid burnout, he has to be flexible in his lessons:

Ya, but a mitigating factor would be the degree of flexibility of the teacher and the that sort of ability to deal with all that kind of ambiguity in the classroom and ahh… some people are better playing with that than others. Ambiguity and tolerance versus tolerance. And I don’t know why that comes to mind but I’m good at that I don’t mind that kind of stuff. In fact if things are too rigid I’d as a teacher don’t enjoy it and as a student I don’t enjoy it I like a bit of freedom so… (Interview 3)

Given this reality, he suggests that this is not a course for every teacher since it requires such an extremely flexible approach to teaching:

Ummm… you have to be so flexible every single second of your class. If you don’t have that degree of flexibility you’re gonna just create problems for yourself. And for the students that can be dealt with ummm… fairly readily if there is a degree of flexibility but then you have to have that amount I guess you’re modeling it for students but at the same time you have to those expectations for students as well and some students are are like some teachers and I don’t think I don’t want to say it as as a criticism but it’s a personality type but they’re less willing to be flexible as well. And a lot of students, ‘Well, how come they get extra time? How come this? And how come that?’ And there’s a lot of discontent. Other students are more flexible and they don’t mind as much. (Interview 3)

He repeats the need to be adaptable in his first journal: “The teacher is required to accommodate and make changes on the fly, so to speak…” (Journal 1) In observation one, the overwhelming need for Mr. Orellana to adapt and to be flexible is noted: “teacher in an awkward position” (Observation 1). In addition, he tries to alleviate these challenges with students’ frustration regarding the curriculum by explaining to them the nature of a multi-level class:

Ahhh… it does it does put some extra pressure but ummm… one of the things I kind of do to kind of allay the the pressure is I tell students that ummm… they have to remember that they are in a multi-level class so there are different ummm… expectations for the different levels. One of the things I do so I do that and I tell them OK well you might finish 5 minutes earlier so you can either do you can either help one of the other people out or you can work on some homework from other courses or you can work on your ISP. I try to do that but it doesn’t always work. Or I get the As and Bs to just give me whatever they’ve done. And I take that into consideration. Or we just ass assume they’re going to do less and they participate for up to the point they will have finished and then the others will finish off what was expected as a group discussion. (Interview 3)
Bell (1991) too suggests that teachers talk to their students about multi-level classes: “Explain to them the limitations of the mixed class and ask them for suggestions as to how the problems might be overcome” (pp. 14-15).

**Same Work.** Regardless, given the challenges of preparing and teaching a multi-level class, Mr. Orellana is not always able to modify the work. He further stresses that if there is some modification, it is not for all levels and it is minimal:

In terms of prep, you might not be able to prep for all the levels and possibilities as well as you could. Modifications. Sometimes I get a chance to modify things but maybe it’s modified for level C from level E but not I don’t get a chance to to bring it down level A level yet. Ummm… just the chaos in the classroom sometimes, ummm… I’m trying to bring everybody under control. Running around during activities although I I kind of like that I don’t mind that kind of it reminds me of when I was a waiter, cook, sous-chef at a restaurant. (Interview 3)

**Work is Simple and Slow.** Hence, if the work is not modified for all of the levels, challenges occur. If it is changed for the lower level learners, the higher level students are left with a lot of free time:

Ahhhh… there is a lot of down time. Ummm… and one of the things I do get them to do is work on homework for other courses that kind of thing. Ummm… I also because it’s ESL course I sometimes just let them kind of google things on the computer. Ummm… but there definitely is some down time. And I suppose I could come with extra things prepared but it being it my first ummm… time through the course I haven’t I haven’t even thought about I mean I’ve thought about doing that but I haven’t done anything about it. It wouldn’t happen till probably the second time through the course. So it’s one other option give them some extra things but I know there would be a lot of complaining (The participant laughs.) and groans and moans if that were what I did do which I’m thinking of doing something like that but… (Interview 2)

Despite the higher level students are granted free time when they are allowed to do other work or explore the Internet, they feel annoyed when the work does not challenge them: “Definitely frustration and I think it’s often just with when it’s too easy ummm… but it’s perfect level for As and Bs the ummm… like quickly they finish and they feel disengaged ummm…” (Interview 2). In the first observation, it is noted: “ESL C, Ds – material is appropriate; however, little work covered for the time-not pushed-very relaxed curriculum…” (Observation 1). In the questionnaire, on two occasions teachers strongly show their agreement that at times, the work is too easy and students’ academic needs are not met. Bell (1991) stresses that the teacher has to keep in mind that students will sometimes be left in limbo: “At times some students will sit idle
while you spend longer than you planned on getting another group organized. That’s the way it goes. It doesn’t mean the teacher is a failure” (p. 15).

Mr. Orellana further states that while some higher level learners do the work regardless of their frustration; others, however, completely refuse to participate:

How many turn off at the advanced level. If it’s a really easy activity, ummm… or they feel it’s kind of like beneath them, maybe as high as like some feel the obligation of getting something done regardless of whether they like it or not ummm… but others don’t ahhh… maybe 30%, 25, 30%. Somebody like ummm… will do it no matter what. Somebody like… if they don’t like it, you gotta sit right next to them or they won’t do it. (Interview 3)

He cautions that one danger of the higher level students disengaging is that they get bored and distract others:

They feel like it’s a bit of a waste of time. And then maybe they’ve done it before in another class or they’ve thought about it or they’ve talked about it with friends or they are over… they finished it in 2 or 3 minutes and “now what’s next?” and they’re taking the rest of the class ummm… in a different direction and with a lot of distraction and maybe they don’t have any homework or this or that so they want to go on the computer and then if they do, then may may may 5 minutes of doing something they’re supposed to be doing and then all of the sudden they’re on You Tube and then the As are all so… (The interviewer and the participant burst into laughter). (Interview 1)

Work is Difficult. When he considers the lower level students’ responses to the work, he explains that they are challenged on many fronts and like the higher level learners, they too get distracted because of their frustration:

…And the level of both grammar and vocabulary and idiomatic expressions and listening, reading, writing, all of those components ummm… the the activities a little bit too difficult. I know I could make modifications and I often do things like allow them to work with a partner or to ahhh… consult a dictionary or to write part of it in their own language but even having done that or having said that ummm… there’s still distraction issues and when I’m not there sitting with them, sometimes it within about a minute they feel it’s too difficult and I’ve got to go around and there are about 5 or 6 of them in the class that I need to constantly be sort of bouncing back and forth between and ummm… I can see them just kind of turn off. (Interview 2)

He estimates that the lower level students disengage about, “40%. That’s probably conservative” (Interview 2). In all six observations, the lower level learners are seen to be “…playing, disengaged, looking out the window-reading material is too difficult” (Observation 1). He also explains that the lower level students feel badly when they are unable to complete the assignments like their higher level peers:
Ahhh… I think often the As and Bs feel maybe there hasn’t been enough time for them to finish so if it’s time to sort of move on because ummm… just the dynamic requires that in the class ummm… there’s either maybe ahh… ahh… a lack of understanding of why we’re moving on ummm… and maybe a concern about the fact they haven’t finished yet and maybe I’m trying to explain OK it didn’t really matter that you finished, the whole point was just everybody’s going to get to different ummm… place in the assignment and that’s part of how I deal with the the fact that it’s multi-level but they want to finish the assignment and they feel that something is incomplete and they go away with ahhh… sort of negative feeling about the activity because they weren’t able to complete to the same degree as the other students were. (Interview 2)

In the second observation, it is noted that “ESL Ds collect books → ESL As haven’t finished, but books collected” (Observation 2). This decreases the lower level students’ confidence and willingness to take risks:

…the level A would feel less like taking risks, ummm… probably less at ease, less willing to try new things out ummm… get stuck at the beginning and I’m sort of as as as it groups up and they’re off doing their thing I’m kind of circulating around and ahhh… definitely spend more time with the Level As and Bs than I do with the Cs, Ds, and Es. (Interview 1)

For that reason, Mr. Orellana stresses that it is especially important for the lower level learners to have opportunities to practice their speaking in order to increase their confidence:

…I would say that the lower levels ummm… there’s less communication overall although it has grown since the beginning of the course because I can tell that their levels are are are improving and that they’re they’re growing in their ability to speak English and especially the sort of the day to day kind of conversational stuff but probably more limited the scope of the relationship than it is with students at a higher level… (Interview 1)

**Preference for Speaking in Groups.** Not only does he see the importance of building confidence around speaking activities in the classroom, but he also values speaking activities that link English language learners to the community outside of the classroom. For example, in one unit, he asks students to teach about their first language and culture which then empowers students to connect with others outside of their first language culture:

… One of the things I got them to do and I think I might use it as an actual ummm… assignment next semester is teach something of your own language to the class ummm… there will be like a selection of things you could teach some greetings, and mmmm… maybe some names of some common foods and and other kind of common language maybe how do you say your name and this and that and ummm… I don’t know maybe even have like a little bit of like a bar like a very basic quiz on it so that people take it a bit more seriously but that might be something we could do. It would be cool to walk
around school and if you know somebody’s from such and such a culture say hello in their language and I think that creates some ahhh… vibe of ahhh… of harmony and and show that you have a a desire to to at least learn something about that other person’s culture…(Interview 2).

Through this activity, students develop an appreciation for living in a multi-cultural society:
“…If you go to the store and if there’s a Korean ummm… ummm… business person or Russian or whatever and you know how to say definitely it ahhh… those kinds of things go along way towards cultural harmony” (Interview 2). He also mentions that he provides activities which encourage students to see themselves as capable participants in co-curricular activities:

… Another thing I’ve done and it’s an activity that ummm… was part of the course already and ahhh… so you probably know know about it already is the ahhh… activity where students have to create a dialogue from which you look at group member types but they also have to talk about ummm… and make some suggestions about how they would connect co-curricular activities at [school]. So I think that’s a really good activity sort of like a a practicing of what you would do outside of the classroom in the real world. (Interview 2)

Moreover, Mr. Orellana underscores classroom activities which do not require language, could possibly help students realize that getting involved in outside activities does not always require great language proficiency:

I think there’s times when they really enjoy it ummm… I think some of those times are when language isn’t the only factor so I’m thinking of ummm… one day in particular where we did ummm… some charades and language was not the only sort of factor in in having fun and getting involved… (Interview 1)

Finally, Mr. Orellana states that there are definitely links between students’ roles inside and outside the multi-level classroom. He recollects how he makes students consider these connections:

…I’m quick to remind ummm… them if they’re on the soccer team and they’re in my cl in my ESL class that there should be leaders in the ESL class and then when we’re out on the soccer field, I remind them that they should be leaders on the soccer field because of you know, they’re maybe higher level English ummm… compared to some of other members of the team so… (Interview 2)

Therefore, he values helping students make connections between the multi-level classroom and the world outside of the classroom; however, he also recognizes that there may be times when the classroom cannot fully prepare students for their experiences outside of this secure environment:
… the nice thing about it is modeling the situation that they might be able to ummm… use outside of the class either as the person being mentored or as the mentor in a club ummm… but at the same time, if you go into the real world and you take away that those … structures that the classroom provides … in the situation that’s a bit artificial but it’s I mean a classroom situation and and the reinforcement of the teacher of people having to get along it might ummm… I could see it having both negative and positive effects. It might create this false sense of what might happen outside of the classroom for students but at the same time as I said before it might a nice model so I think it depends on a whole number of factors. They’re hard to predict. (Interview 3)

Nature of the ESL subject teacher’s relationship with his or her students in a multi-level classroom

Close Bond with English Language Learners. Mr. Orellana acknowledges that he has a close relationship with English language learners because he shares the common experience of immigration: “…I feel I can really relate ESL students because I feel for my my background and my family’s background” (Interview 3). He believes that since they know that he has also been an immigrant, they feel a special connection to him: “For the most part, because they I think they see me as somebody who’s non-threatening and quite accepting they, although they sometimes take advantage of it as well, but for the most part I think they’re ummm… they feel very ahhh… very at ease with me” (Interview 1). In every observation, it is noted that students are very informal with their teacher: “Students talk while teacher is talking” (Observation 3). In addition, they assume his duties: “write the agenda on the board, books-hand out” (Observation 2). Also, they speak out when they do not like Mr. Orellana’s work: “Students rebel-Shouting!” (Observation 1). Overall, it can be summarized as “kids comfortable-talk out, move” (Observation 1). He repeats this sentiment in his journal “I feel like I have a bond with this class that is absent in my other classes. There is a feeling of mutual caring, friendship, tolerance, and understanding” (Journal 1). Given that there is a special bond between him and the students, he accepts that students may seek support from him that goes well beyond his classroom duties: “Yes, definitely a facilitator ummm… and a number of other things. Everything from ummm… but like any teacher I guess from class clown, to mmm… ummm… a mime, to ummm… psychologist, so social worker, sociologist, teacher, father, mother… (The participant laughs.)…” (Interview 1). Balliro (1997) cautions that teachers need to not over extend themselves with students: “Boundaries are where you can reasonably draw limits between yourself and, in this case, your students. If you have no boundaries, you will simply burn
yourself out within a couple of years and have no resources to draw from to continue teaching” (p. 53). Moreover, he describes the important nurturing role of the ESL teacher who should create a safe space for English language learners where they can practice their speaking, ask questions, and learn about Canadian culture; he believes this caring environment is especially important for the lower level students:

Ummm… I th with any classroom I think but in particular with ummm… a classroom of immigrants and language second language learners you have to provide an environment it’s artificial but ummm… necessary which they feel comfortable so as a teacher you have to show interest in their culture, show interest in their problems as as immigrants, ummm… find things that are interesting to to activities to to do and topics of discussion et cetera that are of interest to them as immigrants and from the student perspective they need to feel ummm… supported by the teachers, supported by fellow students, feel that mistakes are not going to be pounced upon anybody. They could be anything from like language mistakes, to curriculum mistakes, to just mistakes in terms of behaviour, accepted ummm… you know conduct from a from a student and maybe they don’t understand that this is not not how you do things in Canada. That needs to be taught explicitly sometimes. So I think the teacher wary of that and you don’t want st A level As and Bs, especially if they’re in a multi-level class, shutting down because they feel ummm… that not comfortable enough to participate (Interview 3)

On another occasion he stresses his important role of creating a risk-free environment for the English language learners as they struggle to understand Canadian culture:

… As well as I mean I personally feel even more so than with the regular classroom this should be a place of of ummm… we feel the that the risk is low for trying new things. So there’s a low risk taking ummm… risk taking is not a big deal because you feel comfortable in the environment and part of that is I think of giving some space for a bit of noise some times which could be perceived as ummm… a lack of management but I don’t I don’t think so necessarily but I know some teachers do think of that as poor management but… (Interview 2).

Again, in his first journal he reiterates his feelings for a secure classroom: “… the dynamic requires the teacher to be patient, spontaneous, fun, understanding, trusting, caring and a creator of a friendly, risk-taking environment” (Journal 1).

Despite his desire to create a safe environment for his students, he worries that he could do them a disservice for when they enter into mainstream Canadian culture:

It’s kind of paradoxical but this idea of creating ummm… an environment where you are comfortable taking risks is a bit of an artificial environment and if you think that’s how the average Canadian is going to treat you then your in for a shock. So that’s sometime sometimes one of my worries about creating like a very comfortable environment is that I mean there’s no other thing there’s nothing else I could do I have no other option in in
my mind and especially given my sort of philosophy of teaching but I just worry about that. (Interview 2)

From these comments, it is clear that Mr. Orellana feels that his role goes far beyond that of a classroom teacher.

**Individual Attention.**Considering Mr. Orellana’s very deep concern for his students, it is not surprising that one of his preoccupations is wondering whether he provides enough individual attention to all of his students: “Well the first thing that comes to mind is just not giving enough time to everybody who needs it, or getting to know some students as well as you could…” (Interview 3). When asked if he does spend enough time with all students, he responds,

Mmmm… I don’t think so. Ummm… because there are quieter students who are at a higher level and there are more boisterous students who are at a higher or lower level so obviously they get ummm… attention. I try to ummm… give everybody some of my attention but ummm… obviously the lower level requires extra explanation and and ummm… support. (Interview 1)

Similarly, in the questionnaire, teachers indicate twice that they feel students do not get enough of their time and often they are left waiting for the teacher. Hofer and Larson (1997) also stress the importance of individual attention: “During this open study time, we rotate among individuals or groups of students to offer more one-one-one attention and support…” (p. 2). Mr. Orellana estimates that he spends most of his time with the lower level students: “… individual I would say… let’s look at individual work As and Bs probably 80% of the time” (Interview 2). This frequent monitoring of the lower level learners is noted in all of the observations: “checks with As… confirms understanding” (Observation 4).

Because of the neediness of the lower level students, he often depends on the higher level learners to take care of themselves as he helps their lower level classmates: “They function at an independent enough level that I’m not as concerned about them. I do check around ummm… to see how they’re they’re doing but they tend to be functioning fine. They some sometimes they they work together in collaboration” (Interview 3). However, he does acknowledge that one danger of counting the higher level learners to self-monitor, is that if they lose their focus, he may not notice until a great deal of time has passed:

Definitely I feel sometimes that I’m not rein either reinforcing ideas as well as I could with them or I’m not tracking their work through the steps ummm… maybe of of of the given class or over a period of time ummm… that they need to go through to get from
from point A to point D or whatever. Ummm… so definitely difficult to track as well and ummm… inform them of places where maybe they’re going off topic or they’re not doing quite as well or and sometimes what I get is ummm… if if the pair, if it’s a pair, a pairing or a small group and they’re high level if they’re not on track, and I don’t realize it till the end, then they’ve not done the work at all because I’ve been too busy with the As and Bs. It’s happened on a few occasions with certain groups or pairings. (Interview 2)

Also, Bell (1991) states that occasionally when a teacher encourages students to work independently, students may feel uncomfortable without a great deal of teacher attention; however, Bell (1991) urges that there are benefits to this type of work over teacher focused work: “This may be the pattern of education that students are used to, but it does fail to acknowledge their experiences and abilities as adults in charge of their own lives” (p. 71). Hence, when working with teenagers this point may be applied to a certain degree.

Also, although he realizes that the higher level participants can mainly do the classroom work with little assistance, he fears they have needs that extend beyond the classroom and he is not always available to address the higher level learners’ personal needs:

…one assumes that the the upper level students would need less attention and it’s often the case but not always ummm… maybe the students need attention for other reasons that aren’t directly related to the activity maybe for things that are happening outside of the classroom or at home but I definitely feel that the level A, B, and Cs and especially if I group them together they absorb almost 85, 90% of my time. (Interview 1)

Similarly, Valentic (2005) cautions teachers to attend all students: “It is important to have personal contact with all the students…The teacher can help the child to feel self-esteem creating a happy and balanced teaching environment. Our personal contact with students, listening, talking, discussing the problems will be more productive than punishment…” (p. 2). In fact, because Mr. Orellana is spread thinly trying to help all levels, especially the lower level students who require his individualized attention, occasionally, he loses track of who needs help at all:

Well, sometimes you get six, seven, eight, asking for your help all at once. And mmmm… maybe because of language they don’t ummm… couch the language in such a way that a teacher would expect them to ask for help so some of it’s just kind of like a demand and I know that it might not be that way might be either a direct translation from their language but they have a different way of expressing it or they don’t have the language yet so that can be problematic. So from my perspective I have to teach that ummm… how to make a nice request, a polite request of somebody, but then others ya, other students ummm… just sometimes feels like a madhouse. And people asking for something and I’d sometimes I’d forget who what the order was and I go to the wrong person and that person gets so resentful. (Interview 3)
In the first observation, it became very apparent that many students were demanding of Mr. Orellana’s time at once: “Teacher constantly circulating” (Observation 1). Although for the most part the higher level learners tolerate that his attention is mainly on their lower level peers, it is they who can get annoyed when their needs are not met: “…I would say if I’m not careful, the As and Bs will not be able to advocate well for themselves. So it tends to be with the higher levels because they’re better able to express annoyance” (Interview 3). In an attempt to free more of his time to support all students, Mr. Orellana calls on higher level students to act as mentors for their lower level classmates:

… different kinds of opportunities… Definitely because of the fact that the class is extremely heterogeneous, extremely multi-level. You get as a an ESL student an opportunity to be if you’re at level A to be a student obviously but if you’re at level E you also get the opportunity to be a teacher, tutor, mentor ummm… gateway into ummm… culture of the school that kind of thing and to clubs and and and teams. (Interview 1).

In fact, Mr. Orellana requests that a more advanced student help keep the lower level learners focused (Observation 2). He sees that this mentoring opportunity can also help the mentors see themselves as leaders in a variety of contexts outside of the classroom. He acknowledges that when students share the same language, it is an excellent tool to facilitate the mentoring:

Often, it’s me asking people to connect. If it’s same language background, it once the connection is there it tends to happen more readily but if it’s different language background, I’m just thinking of ahhh… ummm… Turkish with Korean or Filipino, Tagalog rather, ummm… I usually have to prompt it or doesn’t happen. (Interview 3)

Mr. Orellana describes that even with peer mentors and his constant circulation around the room, at times, there are students who act out due to a variety of reasons and often this causes him difficulty in his classroom management:

Without enforcement because I sometimes get very engrossed with level A and Bs, ummm… if they’re in the mood, then they’ll do it without much prompting but if they’re not in the mood and certain members of the class are a bit more ummm… influential amongst other peers and they’ll take other students off task and if I don’t sort of stay on it, if I’m in the middle of something with an A, B and I have to go and put out a fire so to speak elsewhere ummm… that just becomes difficult to to keep the A, B on task and ahhh… it just becomes a a jungle… (Interview 2)

He stresses there are two reasons for students’ disruptive:
I think we have to distinguish between two kinds of going off track. One is doing the work but not following the directions or not producing the work that I’ve expected either it could be because of the language barriers or maybe I haven’t explained it ummm… as simply enough or as clearly enough as I could. The other is ummm… is students deciding they’re not gonna do it because Mr. Orellana’s too busy with other people and he’s not going to catch me. So those are two kinds of going off track. Ummm… how often does it happen? It depends on the student and it depends on the activity if it’s something that’s engaging ummm… but maybe about 15% of the time, 20% of the time, ya maybe more ahhh… So a little bit off track maybe 40, 45% of the time. (Interview 3)

In his second journal, he also describes classroom management issues: “…we have reached the point in which the so-called ‘honeymoon is over’ in our teacher-student dynamic, and students who like my style are content while those who do not are beginning to make complaints” (Journal 2). He attributes many classroom management issues due to the immaturity of the high school students. He compares them to his former adult students:

Ya also ummm… adults are more likely to stay on task, they’re more mature, they’re more likely to be supportive if the teacher needs to quiet things down they’ll do it ummm… more quickly as opposed to the the high school class who just ya it sometimes takes several minutes and ummm… sometimes insults going across. I mean we always stop and talk about insults but ahhh… you don’t get that in the adult class. (Interview 3)

In several observations, the lower level students act out: “ESL As-kicking & pushing” (Observation 3) and “the teacher near As again!” (Observation 2); however, the higher level students also disrupt: “higher levels wander, look out window, play with basketball” (Observation 3).

Nature of the ESL students’ experiences with their peers in a multi-level classroom

Empathy for Peers. Mr. Orellana recognizes that English language learners do feel empathy for each other; however, there may be different levels of empathy for the lower level peers. Mr. Orellana briefly notes this empathy toward each other:

… ESL students tend to identify with other ESL students more readily than say with other students outside of the ESL program especially if they’re lower level because if you don’t speak English and he doesn’t speak English I guess we’re all kind of in the same situation but if you can help somebody out because you’ve been in that situation already as a newcomer to Canada ummm… and you can guide that person I think I think there’s more of a readiness. I think it’s a good experience. I think that often ummm… non ESL students don’t get that same opportunity. (Interview 2)
Hofer and Larson (1997) encourage teachers to “build a group identity” (p. 2). They continue to explain the advantages of this identity which are creating a safe learning environment, decreasing isolation, and encouraging participants to identify and “act on issues that are central to their lives. To begin weaving a sense of belonging, we encourage a lot of talk around who we all are as human beings” (p. 2).

Cooperative Learning. Given this empathy, he asks the higher level students to engage in cooperative learning with their lower level classmates:

A lot of integration ummm… sort of I like to think of it as vertical I guess integration so mmm… mixing students up an when I can as often as possible into different groups with the number of levels happening. Ummm… for a number of reasons: A) Just so that the students who do not understand who are at lower levels can have some support from higher level students. I’ve also put students together in language background groups so that they can interpret and translate for fellow students who are at lower levels. (Interview 1)

The cooperative learning is present in all of the observations: “Students teach each other words” (Observation 3). Mr. Orellana stresses that the value of cooperative learning is not only for the lower level learners, but also the higher level students who learn to work with lower level peers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds: “Yes. I think, I think it’s a good opportunity in fact ummm… that mentor-tutor role teacher role ca if it’s one cultural background helping another cultural background or language background out ummm… it can bridge certain gaps with it. I think it’s a really excellent opportunity…” (Interview 1). Throughout the cooperative learning, he notes that it is more often the lower level learners who ask for the support from the higher level students, when they are struggling with the course work:

…when it’s something that is maybe more geared towards a level, level C, D, E, ummm… there’s a lot of frustration. I can tell. They’ve got their dictionaries out and their consulting their their the person who’s maybe their mentor in the class ummm… who speaks their same language that kind of thing. (Interview 1)

Occasionally, some of the higher level learners volunteer to assist their lower level peers or Mr. Orellana requests their leadership: “I know one … really enjoys that role of mentorship and then there was the the surprise … he’s only a B or a C and ahhh… and eventually took on the role of the leader of the group he was resisting it for the entire sort of class…” (Interview 2). When Mr. Orellana considers formal pairing between higher and lower level learners, he feels that would be beneficial for the students: “… That’s an excellent idea. Ummm… there’s been some informal
kind of groupings … and then sometimes I kind of get them together in sort of informal pairings but there’s no official kind of ummm… mentorship going on but that’s a really good idea” (Interview 3). He especially notes that the higher level students not only serve to support their lower level peers’ immediate needs, but they are also representative of who the lower level classmates could be in the future: “…when the level levels are are further apart it becomes more of ummm… a mentor kind of of relationship with them looking to the other person to be sort of more of a leader” (Interview 1). As well, when lower level learners struggle, it is common for them to seek the support of higher level classmates who share their first language: “…They’ve got their dictionaries out and their consulting their their the person who’s maybe their mentor in the class ummm… who speaks their same language that kind of thing” (Interview 1).

Moreover, the lower level students appreciate mentors who share another common language with them. For example, Mr. Orellana describes how an ESL A/B supports a struggling lower level by using Spanish; this is not the ESL A/B’s first language: “…a low to mid A especially in terms of speaking and listening, he writes at a fairly good level but his speaking and listening is a bit lower. But they have, they share Spanish and it’s a good thing…” (Interview 3). In fact, they become so talkative in this shared language, Mr. Orellana has to move them to the front to quiet them: “…Ya. I moved them up to the front because they were being too sort of chatty… I think it was a good idea ummm… I’m better able to make them focus” (Interview 3).

**Higher Level Students Frustrated.** Despite the camaraderie among the English language learners, there are still moments of tension. Mr. Orellana describes how the higher level learners often feel frustrated when they wish to progress with their work and they have to wait for or support their lower level peers: “When they feel engaged in what they’re doing and they want to finish what they’re doing ummm… it does feel like a burden” (Interview 2). He estimates that this annoyance on the part of the higher level students only happens a small percentage of the time: “Mmmm… probably not… this is a fairly good class so ummm… maybe 10% of the time. That’s it. That’s ahhhh… a ball park” (Interview 2). In the questionnaire, teachers underscore that some students get annoyed when the teacher is not always available and that they must wait. He also has witnessed that when the higher level students become frustrated, they act out: “…And it’s a good opportunity to be the class clown because everybody else is a little bit too shy to be that class clown. So ummm… if it’s a little bit in their personality, but might not come out in a regular classroom it’s more likely to present itself in a multi-level
Moreover, he describes there are higher level learners who do not wish to engage with their lower level classmates. He explains that they often work in isolation, with little support from him: “They function at an independent enough level that I’m not as concerned about them. I do check around ummm… to see how they’re they’re doing but they tend to be functioning fine. They some sometimes they they work together in collaboration” (Interview 3).

**Lower Level Students Discontent.** There are also lower level learners who feel that they do not want to work with higher level students because they feel intimidated: “Definitely there’s ummm… in terms of confidence, and engagement ummm… ri ahhh… risk taking ummm… involvement with other students ummm… the roles they’re prepared to take when they are in group pairings ummm… or groups as well as in in in just with one other partner ummm…” (Interview 1). Mr. Orellana explains that their shyness is often exacerbated in larger groups. He continues, “…So I think the teacher wary of that and you don’t want st A level As and Bs, especially if they’re in a multi-level class, shutting down because they feel ummm… that not comfortable enough to participate…” (Interview 3).

**Homogeneous Grouping.** In order to avoid many challenges, Mr. Orellana has considered more homogeneous classrooms: “Loooow I think we probably discussed this but lower levels not understanding so requiring extra back up ummm… higher levels finishing sooner, higher levels getting frustrated either the the fact that it’s too easy or they finish too early or lower levels feeling that it’s too hard and they can’t they can’t deal with it” (Interview 3). In addition, in the questionnaire, teachers show overwhelming agreement that students prefer working with others who are at the same level.

*Nature of ESL students’ participation in a multi-level classroom*

This section highlights factors which Mr. Orellana sees as enhancing and limiting ESL students’ ability to feel a sense of belonging in a community of practice.

*Factors which enhance students’ ability to belong to a community of practice*

**Self.** When asked questions related to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) “legitimate peripheral participation” conceptual framework, Mr. Orellana indicates that he believes students are moderately pleased with their overall participation in the classroom. In addition, he sees connections between participation in the classroom and participation in co-curricular activities and the community. He states that their happiness with their participation is based on their
comfort level in the classroom and their ability to make connections between the multi-level class and other courses. His words echo Wenger (1998) when he calls for learning to be meaningful whereby students can invest themselves and contribute to their community of practice (p. 272). Mr. Orellana ranks their participation in the multi-level classroom 4 out of 6. He notes many factors are at play which impact their participation including personality (Interview 1). He defines their participation on students’ ability to connect what they do in the multi-level classroom to other contexts: “I can think think of about six or seven who really find it useful and valuable in other courses but they tend to be quite a bit more mature ummm… but the the rest of the class which is the majority I think they see it as only being sometimes useful” (Interview 2); this parallels imagination (Wenger, 1998, p. 273).

**Peers/Teacher/Self.** Mr. Orellana states that if participation is defined solely by their enthusiasm in the classroom, he would rank it higher than a 4: for the most part, the English language learners thoroughly enjoy their interactions with their peers and him: “I think only if you were to ask me the question about happy with the class, happy with me, or happy with students, it would probably go up” (Interview 2). Mr. Orellana sees that not only do the students usually understand each others’ challenges, but he too, as an immigrant, relates to their issues. These comments support Wenger (1998) who urges that social relationships play a key role in maximizing the engagement of participants (p. 272). He feels that he should be providing appropriate work: “In the classroom… ummm… a good lesson plan, teacher enthusiasm…” (Interview 1). Like the student participants in the questionnaire, the statement which shows the highest weighted score is that teachers agree if students feel welcomed in the classroom by peers and teachers, students extend this positive energy to feeling welcomed in the school and outside community.

**Cooperative Learning/Self.** He notes the important role of cooperative learning for student participation. It acts as a scaffold. It is not uncommon that he asks the higher level students to engage in cooperative learning with their lower level peers since they recall their own struggles: “… independence goes up as language level goes up so the peer assistance part’s nice definitely for the lower levels ummm… ya there seems to be a lot of collaboration and I like the fact …” (Interview 1). Typically, the higher level classmates serve as role models for the lower level peers whereby they draw on their other languages as tools for this support. Moreover, he
stresses how the advanced level students and the lower level students can develop not only their speaking ability, but also their cultural knowledge through these mentoring opportunities:

Yes. I think, I think it’s a good opportunity in fact ummm… that mentor-tutor role teacher role ca if it’s one cultural background helping another cultural background or language background out ummm… it can bridge certain gaps with it. I think it’s a really excellent opportunity to ummm… (Interview 1)

Hence, this supports students’ ability to gain knowledge that helps them not only within the multi-level classroom, but also in the school and community.

Preference for Speaking in Group/Self. More specifically, Mr. Orellana indicates that it is important that he provide appropriate work which offers opportunities for students to engage authentically in conversation:

ability to move desks and tables around easily ummm… opportunities to go outside of the classroom, field trips ummm… maybe technology, access to enough computers on a regular basis for doing different things, ummm… maybe some something that we don’t have but maybe access to a video camera on a regular basis. (Interview 1)

Hence, he stresses the importance of engaging in speaking activities as key to their ability to participate in and out of the classroom. He echoes the sentiment when he highlights the importance of having a first language as a scaffolding tool for communication:

… feeling I think that there’s somebody else in the classroom that speaks your language... I think that helps quite a bit it makes you feel like you’re not on your own especially if you’re a lower level student ummm… s students I some some leadership, but positive leadership and positive feedback ummm… good listening skills support activities ya…(Interview 1)

He continues to explain that he sees an important connection between these activities and “…activities outside of the classroom…” (Interview 1). Given the importance he places on student participation because he highlights that it leads to greater participation both in and out school, it is not surprising that he calls for an assistant to help increase student participation in the classroom:

Probably more than in any other classroom, this multi-level GLS course requires a a teaching assistant ummm… there’s not a lot of money in the budget I realize that but there’s just sometimes more need than there is sort of time available and and ummm… sort of teacher time to ahhhh… collaborate with students and provide the support. I think that would be good. (Interview 1)
He wishes that more students would get involved in co-curricular activities in order to use their communication skills from the classroom: “…I’m not sure how m is it mandatory to be a member of the ESL Ambassadors’ Club I’m sure it’s not… (Interview 1). He gives their overall participation a moderately low number out of 6: “I know a number of them are on the soccer team 3 or 4 of them ummm… and a number of others are involved in the ESL Ambassador’s Club, and other sports but I think I think it’s low. I think there’s definitely a a barrier there I think I might put it at maybe 3. 2 to 3 (Interview 1). He specifies that the higher level learners are more likely to engage in co-curricular activities due to their confidence with their speaking; they have practiced in the multi-level classroom.

In contrast, he believes that the lower level students tend to withdraw from co-curricular events: “Because I find that the higher level students are more likely to participate and certain language backgrounds are more likely to participate in co-curricular, but lower levels ummm… ahhh… are less likely to get involved ummm… So people with higher levels tend to be more involved than people with lower levels maybe they hang out with their own ahhh… language background during lunch… (Interview 2). In his first journal, Mr. Orellana comments on the tendency for middle and higher level students to participate more than lower level learners: “However, participation goes up markedly beyond levels A and B” (Journal 1). Similarly, the first observation notes show this point: “ESL As isolated-Don’t participate-distracted” (Observation 1). Regardless, as time passes, he does notice that lower level students are more likely to increase their participation: “…I have noticed an increasing independence and sophistication of expression on the part of the lower level students. I am sure that this is a testament to the ever-increasing level of English and confidence of these students” (Journal 2). He explains how he tries to support students’ co-curricular involvement through a variety of activities. For instance, he encourages students to learn about different cultural groups by having students present their first language cultures (Interview 1). In addition, he has them write dialogues which increase their understanding of how they could participate in co-curricular activities: “…So I think that’s a really good activity sort of like a a practicing of what you would do outside of the classroom in the real world” (Interview 2). Through this, they also learn to work in groups which can then be transferred to their ability to work in groups in co-curricular activities. In the questionnaire, teachers look favourably on students’ ability to participate in co-curricular activities.
In terms of students’ participation in the community, Mr. Orellana believes they play quite an active role within their family or with other immigrant friends who share their first or additional languages: he scores this high at 5 out of 6. In fact, many of these friendships are formed in their multi-level classes; hence, their alignment is present both within the classroom and outside of the classroom where they support each other in their adaptation to being in a new country. However, he notes that when it comes to integration with mainstream Canadian culture, the participation is less:

When they’re in Canadian society and the mainstream culture I’d I’d think it depends on a whole number of factors ummm… everything from personality type to language level to ummm… options access to money to be able to participate ummm… ability to to leave their their family so the permission and support of the family to be integrated more into the Canadian society so I think it’s difficult to to rate that ummm… I think I’d put it at about a 3 to 4. (Interview 1)

He notes that this is especially true for the lower level learners: “the importance of that degree of comfort is much higher with A, Bs and less so higher level higher functioning ummm…” (Interview 2). This reveals the need to provide enriching communication opportunities in the multi-level classroom which can serve as a safe space to rehearse for the community. Moreover, he highlights the need to provide his students with activities that help them with adjusting to a multicultural world:

Ya. Ummm… in order to like navigate Canadian society you have to be so astute and it isn’t something that happens over night. I I think people have this maybe misconception that when they come to Canada that they they think of Canada as like this homogeneous thing and then they get here and then they realize “Holy Smokes!” Especially if they see like Toronto. You’ve got so many different cultures and language backgrounds interacting and to kind of navigate that I don’t know what to call innerface it just takes a lot of skill and knowledge and patience and desire to understand and and ahhh… get along. (Interview 2)

Here, Mr. Orellana also stresses that the multi-level classroom needs to prepare students to understand diversity; he provides an example of how it can encourage students to see themselves as active members of an ethnically diverse society; this supports Wenger’s (1998) imagination: Mr. Orellana states that he can bring in guest speakers from a variety of cultures; this also helps newcomers meet others from their cultures: “… somebody from different communities so that they ummm… in their own language can find out what’s available to them. That might be something interesting, worthwhile to do” (Interview 1).
Factors which inhibit students’ ability to belong to a community of practice

Course Work. The major factor for students not participating in the multi-level classroom is course material: Mr. Orellana cannot adapt the course material to meet the needs of all of his students: “…like I said I feel like I’m juggling so many so many activities and needs at any given moment that it’s hard…” (Interview 2). In fact, he suggests that there could be separate GLS classes with the ESL As and ESL Bs grouped or the ESL As, ESL Bs, and ESL Cs, or the ESL Cs, ESL Ds, and ESL Es:

Well, you could ummm… streamline the curriculum to their needs so that the As, Bs, you could simplify it, spend more time with it, do simpler activities, have lower, not lower but different expectations, modified expectations, use simpler language, spend more time on a given activity, ummm… sk skip certain elements of activities where it’s taking it to the higher level just because they don’t have the language and then with the the hi Cs, Ds, and Es, ummm… stepping it up a notch, and getting them to do maybe more reflections ummm… applying it a different or higher level, ummm… discussions, it’s hard to put groups together with As to Es in a classroom where As get the chance to participate in a discussion ummm… but the Ds, Cs, Ds, and Es I mean some some dialogue or discussion in groups would be really good but it’s hard to control it when the As and Bs if you’ve got 2 As and Bs per group and there’s 5 of them and and still the people won’t be likely contributing anything so. (Interview 3)

Teacher. Mr. Orellana acknowledges that there are moments when students’ participation can be limited in the multi-level classroom. He touches upon his own weaknesses of not knowing the students’ first languages or not having enough time for all students as minor factors which negatively impact students’ participation in the classroom. On two occasions in the questionnaire, teachers underscore their understanding of students wishing for extra support to help increase their participation both in the classroom and the school community.

Peers. He mentions that other factors could be personality conflicts among students; however, it is not the case in his class: “Peers… ummm… sometimes there are there are personality conflicts between peers. I haven’t seen anything where there are kind of cultural conflicts yet, but that’s definitely a a a possibility but in this this particular course students seem to get along quite well” (Interview 1).

Native-Speakers-Language Barriers. Similarly, Mr. Orellana knows that there are many factors that limit their participation in co-curricular activities: “Again, language barrier, ummm… announcements not ahhh… being clear enough, maybe noise in the classroom ummm… students not able to understand the announcements …” (Interview 1). Mr. Orellana
wishes to nurture their participation by ensuring that they are able to receive written information about co-curricular activities:

I think from personal experience especially for lower level students and it’s probably up to like level D even ummm… having maybe the announcement made over the over the P.A. available to them in some written format or in their own language because I had 4 or 5 level A or B students and even a little bit higher who wanted to join the Jr. Boys’ Soccer Team and didn’t make it to the tryouts and were they approached me after I had already made my first round of cuts so I think there’s definitely a barrier there ummm… I don’t know how to overcome it. (Interview 1).

In addition, he stresses that other more advanced students or the teacher could review the announcements in the classroom to be certain that the less advanced learners have the information to be able to participate: …”Fellow students telling them about announcements who have a higher level. Maybe the teacher going over some of the things ummm… maybe doing a little workshop” (Interview 1). He also notes that classroom activities which review the process of getting involved in co-curricular events serve to help students rehearse or role play these steps (Interview 1). Also, Mr. Orellana calls for leaders of the co-curricular activities who speak different languages to visit English language learner classrooms to encourage their participation in these languages: “Maybe bring in a representative of each of the clubs or sports ummm… who speaks each of the languages in the classroom so that they can provide something in the first language” (Interview 1).

Finally, Mr. Orellana acknowledges that friendships made in the multi-level classroom extend into the community: students practice their speaking and group work in the multi-level diverse classroom and continue this communication practice with the new-found friendships. The multi-level classroom can help to encourage participation through providing work which encourages communication with a wide variety of people: assignments can be linked to finding information from native speakers. As well, he supports bringing in people from communities to give students more information about ways of being involved in their communities.

**Family/Self.** However, he also notes that the low participation of English language learners outside of their family and peers is mainly due to family restrictions, and personal fear and inhibitions (Interview 1).

**ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom**

This section examines which factors Mr. Orellana believes as increasing and decreasing ESL students’ motivation.
Factors which make students feel most motivated

**Peers/Self.** Mr. Orellana’s responses to questions derived from the “Actional Phase” of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation indicate that students are quite motivated: “I think for the most part they feel quite motivated. They’ve really gelled well and ummm… they’re all doing their work and getting it in and having a good time doing it and although things are a little bit chaotic ummm… the odd time ummm… we we get work done” (Interview 1). By his description, it can be understood that students are working cooperatively and for the most part, they empathize with each others’ challenges with learning English and integrating into a new culture; often, the higher level learners serve as role models for the lower level peers. In the questionnaire, teachers strongly agree that students support each other in multi-level classrooms.

**Teacher/Self.** Mr. Orellana believes that his overall enthusiasm is a factor influencing student motivation:

I feel, I mean I know all these kid’s stories now, not all of them, but a number of them, some in more details than others and I feel really motivated and and to to to support them and provide them with a like a safe ummm… non-threatening, risk-taking environment in which they can experiment a little bit and and and ummm… make that transition from their original culture and to but the expectations are of, are of a Canadian of a Canadian classroom, Canadian society. (Interview 1)

This stresses that the “quality of [students’] learning experience” is predominantly positive. Mr. Orellana encourages students to see links among them, the classroom, and Canadian culture. The environment is supportive in that he encourages students to empathize with each other; he even calls upon to peer mentor which is beneficial for both the mentee and the mentor. Overall, the nurturing nature of both the teacher and peers contribute to students’ motivation: “Teacher preparedness and support from peers and having their needs met ummm… as often as possible although it can’t be sort of everyday because it is ahhh… a multi-level classroom...” (Interview 1). Hence, the “classroom reward/goal structure” is highly cooperative. In the questionnaire, teachers also strongly agree that their supportive role strongly contributes to students’ motivation.

**Self.** It is necessary at times for students to self-motivate due to the challenging nature of multi-levels. Mr. Orellana supposes that the higher level learners are more motivated in one sense because the work is manageable for them in comparison to the less advanced students:
Ya, I think it’s definitely higher with the higher levels for the most part. The lower levels, it depends on the difficulty of the task, I can I just can think of some of the students who shut down ummm… because the language is too too high. But you get some As who can function with this stuff that is is is sort of medium difficulty. For the Cs or the ya the Cs but it’s easy for the Es, they can function but some of the lower level As ya they they shut right down. They need something modified. (Interview 3)

**Factors which make students feel least motivated**

**Course Work.** As a result, Mr. Orellana exclaims how impossible it is to satisfy everyone’s curricular needs: “… so again if you appeal to the higher levels, the lower levels suffer, if you appeal to the lower levels, the higher levels suffer, if you appeal appeal to the th

middle it’s good in the middle but it’s not quite right for so there’s never that perfect fit” (Interview 1). Moreover, he summarizes his feelings: “…the higher the degree of of difference between the lower level and the higher level ummm… the crazier it becomes” (Interview 2). Hence, these factors are demotivating.

In other words, the curriculum does not always serve all students in a multi-level classroom and “the quality of [their] learning experience” is lowered: “That would definitely move ummm… into the negative as well ya” (Interview 1). He comments that the “nature of the activity” impacts motivation and sees the need for him to modify his work: “… with some careful planning, humour, and regular activity and dynamic changes on my part, students feel excited about being in the classroom” (Journal 1). In the first observation, it is obvious that the work does not challenge the higher level students: “…motivation in class over time could ↓ don’t take it seriously” (Observation 1). This need is evident when Mr. Orellana considers the motivation of the higher level learners toward the quality of their work. In particular, Mr. Orellana has noticed that the higher level students are less motivated than their lower level classmates in terms of reviewing their performance:

They’re trying to get the task completed. Ummm… they if they don’t do well in particular pardon me, particular ummm… assignment or project they want to know why and they want to know what they can do to fix it for next time, the quality of projects that they hand in, interestingly, ummm… sometimes ummm… lower students are are more men motivated than the higher level students even if it’s difficult… (Interview 2)

Moreover, when the lower level students see how their activity relates to future studies which develop their language proficiency, they are quite motivated even when the task is well beyond their level; this is an example of self-regulation when they are able to make the links. In his
second journal, Mr. Orellana remarks on this with an ESL D activity: “…today students were brainstorming for a 5-paragraph essay and the lower level students, for the most part, were able to complete the task either entirely on their own or with minimal first language assistance from a classroom peer” (Journal 2).

Furthermore, Mr. Orellana hopes that most students can self-motivate like this when there are challenging moments in the classroom because the GLS class has many links to cross-curricular achievement: “There is an understanding that, although the GLS course is of seemingly little academic consequence, it is the course that will help you perform better as a student in all other courses” (Journal 1); however, if students do not self-motivate, he suggests that the class could be split into higher and lower levels:

Something to change motivation… I think ummm… it would be interesting to do the same GLS course where you have maybe As and Bs together, Cs and Ds, and then maybe Es by themselves. I’m not sure how you would divide it up. Ummm… that might improve motivation definitely would in terms of ummm… that the the degree of difficulty of the work ummm… but then maybe other opportunities would be lost but maybe in what you could do to to change that or facilitate that is get the other classes to periodically meet so that ummm… the Es could be the mentors have the opportunity to be a leader ummm… and the Cs but ummm… (Interview 1)

However, he does acknowledge that when the multi-level is split, the positive influence of peer mentoring is lost; he suggests that the separate groups should meet periodically to take advantage of the benefits of mentoring. In the end, he concludes that he would like the best of both worlds with more homogeneous groupings and opportunities for mentoring:

I think I’d put the Bs and Cs together. And Ds and Es. I think that would be the the ideal situation. I know there are restrictions because of budget. And staffing and that kind of thing. But I think it might be nice on a regular basis to get them all together and then they would work it so that ahhhh… the the A B C GLS happened at the same time as the the D E so that you could have those moments of ahhh… working together and and ahhhh… opportunities for mentorship. (Interview 2)

As he explains his feelings in more detail, he highlights the positive effects on speaking skills:

Well, you could ummm… streamline the curriculum to their needs so that the As, Bs, you could simplify it, spend more time with it, do simpler activities, have lower, not lower but different expectations, modified expectations, use simpler language, spend more time on a given activity, ummm… sk skip certain elements of activities where it’s taking it to the higher level just because they don’t have the language and then with the the hi Cs, Ds, and Es, ummm… stepping it up a notch, and getting them to do maybe more reflections ummm… applying it a different or higher level, ummm… discussions, it’s hard to put groups together with As to Es in a classroom where As get the chance to participate in a
discussion ummm… but the Ds, Cs, Ds, and Es I mean some some dialogue or discussion in groups would be really good but it’s hard to control it when the As and Bs if you’ve got 2 As and Bs per group and there’s 5 of them and and still the people won’t be likely contributing anything so. (Interview 3)

He insists that through this set up, all levels, but especially the higher level students, would be more motivated because their curricular needs would be met: “Right. Absolutely. And especially for the the the Ds and Es” (Interview 2). Likewise, in the questionnaire, teachers strongly call for students being in homogeneous groups when engaging in group work.

**Language Barriers.** In terms of participation in the school, Mr. Orellana states his classroom can serve to stimulate student motivation in co-curricular activities. As with his comments regarding student participation, he reiterates that students need a greater awareness of what is available to them and this could be done in his multi-level classroom: “I think education and getting information out there disseminating information is really important and ummm… I sometimes wonder to what degree ummm… many of my As know what is out there and how to get that information to them…” (Interview 1). On a similar note, he feels that students’ motivation in the community outside of school could also be increased in a similar fashion. In order to disseminate the information, Mr. Orellana calls for it to be available through the use of first languages and through written-form rather than solely through listening to announcements:

Ummm… the same thing there’s gotta be some way of getting information to people so that they’re aware of what’s going on and I think the best way to do it ummm… probably even up to a level C or D is ummm… in their first language I think that’s a really good way to do it. But also ummm… sometimes people lev lev levels of reading ummm… are better especially if it’s simple text than their level of listening especially over a P.A. system. The P.A. system for ESL students is like a big mistake. There’s got to be some better way of communicating ummm… information. Maybe a ummm… some kind of a pamphlet or some kind of ummm… student circular letter that goes out that’s catered to the needs of the ESL students. (Interview 1)

In the questionnaire, teachers also note that when students are in multi-level classes, some students feel nervous to voice their opinions out of fear of being ridiculed by others. This shows another form of how language can be a barrier.
ESL students’ identity formation and development vis-à-vis their degree of participation in a multi-level classroom

This section gives light to how Mr. Orellana views ESL students in the classroom, in the school community, and outside of the school community. The labels or roles which they attribute to themselves are also identified by Mr. Orellana.

Students’ perception of themselves in the classroom/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

Overall, Mr. Orellana expresses that his students feel a variety of emotions in the multi-level classroom; however, he pinpoints that they are generally content and self-assured because of the supportive environment created by their nurturing peers and teacher:

We’ve got all of those ummm… in all of the students at any given time but I think as the class has progressed and they become more familiar and confident and sort of who I am as a teacher and who other students are as students and people ummm… I would say that as a as a general rule of the class is feeling happier, more confident, more willing to take risks, all that kind of thing, more outgoing… (Interview 1)

He repeats students’ strong sense of belonging in his first journal: “In the classroom, students see themselves as members of Mr. Orellana’s GLS class” (Journal 1); they have a sense of alignment in their goals of succeeding in a new country. In the questionnaire, teachers highlight students feel confident with their peers’ willingness to support them. Regardless, Mr. Orellana explains that the lower level group tends to be slightly timid, and a little less content than the higher level students. This is due to their confusion with language and their envy of the higher level learners who function with ease in the multi-level classroom (Interview 1). Likewise, in the questionnaire, teachers indicate that they strongly agree that students are occasionally afraid to join in discussions when in multi-level classes.

Occasionally, the higher level learners also get frustrated due to the work (Interview 1). Also, Mr. Orellana feels that part of their happiness comes from their relationship with him:

For the most part, because they I think they see me as somebody who’s non-threatening and quite accepting they, although they sometimes take advantage of it as well, but for the most part I think they’re ummm… they feel very ahhh… very at ease with me. (Interview 1)

Given the variety of feelings in the classroom, there are a variety of roles assumed by the different levels. For example, the lower level learners tend to be withdrawers, clowns, or harmonizers; however, as students’ confidence increases, the higher level learners take on starter
or leadership roles, or they can also be clowns (Interview 1). Mr. Orellana notes that often students discover their roles in the ESL multi-level classroom which they then can see extending beyond the classroom; he highlights that in many of the students’ former classrooms in other countries, they have been discouraged to assume roles:

… They’re just starting to ummm… understand what these different roles mean especially to the to the Canadian ummm… Canadian classroom versus their own classroom. And I think a lot of them have told me that for the most part, ummm… the the discipline can be quite severe in the the the countries they’ve come from so there’s less of an opportunity to to take on different roles so at first, ummm… even though there are some roles they may might be more natural at they’re a bit reluctant but once given the opportunity to kind of explore them I think they end up finding their own natural roles ummm… and by talking about these roles ummm… explicitly and then being given a chance to kind of play with it a little bit in activities they start to see these different ummm… group member types in other groups outside of the GLS classroom. (Interview 1)

Students’ view of themselves in the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves

When Mr. Orellana describes the English language learners in the school community, he notices again that some of students’ feelings and roles in the multi-level classroom are also reflected in the school community. English language learners tend to feel happy and quite confident with other English language peers, regardless of whether they share a language; often, they support each other as they strive to succeed in their studies in order to fulfil their family goals of integration into Canadian society. Also, in the questionnaire, teachers indicate that when students from multi-level classes are with their peer group, they are confident to express their opinion when engaged in co-curricular activities.

However, outside of their English language learner peer group, he sees the lower level learners feeling especially lost; however, this dissipates over time:

Again, it depends on the level, and personality type. The lower level I see them in the hallways and ummm… they they I think they more confused sometimes ummm… definitely more confused in the lower levels but sometimes more confused in they understand what’s going on, the expressions on their faces of kind of disbelief or confusion ummm… but as you as you get higher to a higher level and and they’re here longer and longer I think they understand sort of the culture of the school and the way the school day works and the expectations and ummm… where to find things, and who to find things from and that kind of thing. (Interview 1)
He repeats these feeling in his journals: “In the school, students see themselves as insiders within their own linguistic and cultural groups, as semi-outsiders with other ESL students from different backgrounds, and as full outsiders with non-ESL students, especially those described as ‘Canadian born’” (Journal 1); however, as time passes, “one identifiable difference is in the degree of confidence of lower level students as their competency in English increases” (Journal 2). Likewise, the observations also show improved performance in the lower level group: “ESL As trying more that before-focused-ask questions by raising hands (new)” (Observation 3)

Given English language learners’ happiness and confidence within their peer group, it is common to see most English language learners wanting to be the helpers of other English language learners:

If it’s students of different language backgrounds ummm… I find Parkdown to be an excellent school where there’s not a lot of ummm… discrimination based on cultural background… I’m always impressed by how other students help each other out but that’s my own personal sort of ummm… from things like ummm… being in the weight room, coaching wrestling team, doing ESP, doing ummm… Jr. Boys’ Soccer… (Interview 1)

Moreover, as in the multi-level classroom, the higher level learners tend to be mentors or helpers for the less advanced students (Interview 2). Mr. Orellana explains, “As they become higher-level students then they become a leader… ya definitely as, as they have more experience and confidence and and language ability, they’re more likely to ummm… be able to fulfill some kind of role either to learn natural role or a role that’s been assigned to them by the group” (Interview 1). This is especially true if they share a language: “If it’s students of the same language background I find for the most part it’s it’s excellent…” (Interview 1). This allegiance is not surprising since they share common struggles. In contrast, the lower level students tend to be followers within their English language learner peer group or outside of it:

I think if it was a co-curricular activity in which there was a number of language and cultural backgrounds added, for example the ummm… the junior boys soccer team ummm… people of lower levels would be less likely to play anything but ummm… a quiet role. I don’t want to say withdrawer, but maybe somebody participates but doesn’t ummm… take an only particularly sort of obvious role. (Interview 1)

Overall, Mr. Orellana states that students’ roles could be improved in co-curricular activities if the English language learners had more knowledge about them:

I think it could be better … I like the fact that at Parkdown there’s a number of clubs that are based on culture and language so there’s a Hispanic club, and a Korean club, and a Hebrew Club, and the ummm… African-Caribbean Club, I think I think those are
excellent things to have but even within those clubs sometimes there’s not knowledge of the fact that they exist… Well, the clubcrawl crawl’s kind of for that but I don’t know maybe they could go to these other clubs when they’re having their meetings or and and I don’t know… do a presentation and try to figure some way of involving newer immigrants and lower level students a bit better. (Interview 1)

*Students’ image of themselves outside of the school community/Labels or roles students attribute to themselves*

When Mr. Orellana considers students’ feelings and roles within the community, he admits his knowledge is limited; however he imagines that the happiness among students in the multi-level classroom is recreated when they meet in the community. He continues this view of the students and infers the unity many immigrants feel with each other:

Students see themselves as insiders within their own groups. However, there is no semi-insider/outsider status outside of school with people of non-mainstream Canadian background. Similarly, students view themselves as outsiders with people who are “Canadian born”. (Journal 1)

However, he surmises that even the most confident and happy students from the multi-level classroom can feel isolated in the community if among native speakers: “I see my students depending who it is being any one of those kinds of emotions on any even even ones who are confident have days when they feel ummm… like like maybe they’d be better off back in their own country kind of thing” (Interview 1). In his first journal, he makes similar comments: “…a student with a higher level of English is more likely to risk leadership outside of his/her own group; however, this does not seem to occur to the same degree vis-à-vis “Canadian born” students” (Journal 1).

Like in the school community, Mr. Orellana also speculates that the lower level learners still feel quite shy when they are outside of their family and cultural group; therefore, they likely are withdrawers:

I think ummm… again as the lower level, depending on depending on if the situation is ummm… within their own cultural language background or not. So let’s mention Canadian cultural or ummm… their own language background ummm… they are more likely to play a role if it is the language the first language ummm… environment, but if it’s the if it’s the mainstream environment, the more they have understanding of Canadian culture and the more they the better they speak English, the more likely they are to be able take on a an obvious role (Interview 1)
Finally, he cautions that in certain circumstances, students’ families do not want them to transfer their learning in the multi-level classroom to their home: cultures clash. He explains that this is especially true with women’s roles: “…Ummm… and maybe there’s a conflict between ummm… what happens at home and what happens outside of the home… it might happen more with other other cultures who are a little bit more conservative especially ummm… around sort of roles of women and ahhh… and that kind of thing” (Interview 1).

When considering Wenger’s (1998) definition of identity development and formation, Mr. Orellana shows that students feels varying degrees of “identification” and “negotiability” in the multi-level classroom in terms of engagement, imagination, and alignment. They invest themselves with their peers which is clearly demonstrated by their desire to engage in peer mentoring (engagement), they seek to make connections for themselves in roles beyond the classroom (imagination), and they share common goals with their peers and family (alignment). In addition, the multi-level classroom supports their ability to participate in negotiability: they see how their input is adopted by their peers which is especially true of their lower level peers (engagement), they gain “vicarious experience through stories” shared by their peers so that they better understand how to handle new experiences (imagination), and they actively take part in shaping the shared goal formation of their peers and family through persuading or advising (alignment) (Wenger, 1998, p. 190).

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

When he is asked questions about students’ participation in the multi-level class related to Lave and Wenger (1991) and students’ motivation in the multi-level class based on Dörnyei and Otto (1998), Mr. Orellana’s answers are notably alike. For the most part, he views the multi-level classroom as both a positive and negative environment for students’ participation and motivation. Moreover, his answers reveal that students’ participation and motivation in the multi-level classroom ultimately can be linked to students’ identity formation and development both in the classroom and beyond. In the same way, Lave and Wenger (1991) stress one can see, “…identities as long term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice” (p. 53). Thus, identity entails participation. Also, Dörnyei (2001) briefly touches upon the relationship between motivation and identity: “In settings where the language serves as an important dimension of group identity, the desire to maintain a positive social identity is strongly linked to the motivation of pursuing linguistic practices” (p. 75).
Chapter 8 – Cross-Case Analysis

This chapter provides a synopsis of the research: the case study and questionnaire data. Before beginning the chapter a few points must be noted. First, in this section, data is often paraphrased because it has already been presented in the individual case study participant chapters. Also, the nature of the questionnaire student data must be reiterated. Overall, 38 student participants of different ability levels fully participated in the questionnaire. The data is based on the top 21 questions based on a highest weighted score for all of these participants. Then, the highest weighted score for each ability level grouping was highlighted within these 21 questions from all of the student participants. It must be repeated that the questionnaire data collected for the lower and middle level students cannot be seen as significant due to the low participation numbers of the lower and middle level learners: 2 lower level students, and 2 middle level students. Still, it is interesting to note their responses along side the higher level learners and teacher questionnaire participants and the case study participants in the applicable tables; however, only the higher level students’ and teachers’ questionnaire data will be highlighted in the discussion sections.

Initially, the chapter situates the data in the multi-level language ability groupings’ literature. Then, it highlights emerging themes in the data. The next section considers the data in relation to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation framework and the Actional Phase Main Motivational Influences of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation. Following this, there is a discussion of how the two conceptual frameworks can be connected through self-regulation/imagination and alignment as hinted at in the literature. A model of a modified version of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation influenced by Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation framework and Wenger’s (1998) research is proposed. Moreover, the model not only highlights self-regulation and imagination and alignment, but it goes further to include identity. More specifically, it links Wenger’s (1998) research on identity to the Post-actional Phase Main Motivational Influences of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation. Special attention is paid to the concepts of “identification” and “negotiability” in relation to “self-concept beliefs” or identity. 

*Data situated in the multi-level language ability groupings literature*

In this section, the data is explored in relation to the multi-level language ability groupings literature. Eight themes from the literature review are considered with regard to the
data from the case study and the questionnaire participants. Generally, participants show agreement with themes, partial agreement with themes, and disagreement with themes (see Table 7).

Table 7: Data situated in the multi-level language ability groupings literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Lower Level Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Lower Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Teacher Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Teacher Questionnaire Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level groupings</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers may lose contact time with students</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management may be difficult</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities may be limited</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may have more opportunities for interaction</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may mix with other students from different cultures</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
<td>*MAYBE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Maybe means that the participant both agrees and disagrees with the theme.
Academic students may prefer more homogeneous ability level groupings

From the lower level’s perspective, Archie, in spite of the supportive environment in the multi-level classroom, he notices that there are moments of boredom on the part of the higher level students who he senses might want to be apart from the lower level learners. Likewise, he admits that he too occasionally feels tension whereby he is frustrated by his lack of language proficiency when he is among more advanced level students. He also mentions that when he speaks to his same level peers he feels positively about the experience. He sees himself as an extrovert with them because he feels a greater freedom to speak. Despite this, he sees the higher level students as role models who he appreciates for their support on all fronts: school work and friendship.

Bina, a middle level student, also says that the lower level students often feel envious of the higher level learners. Likewise, Natalie, the other middle level learner, acknowledges that her lower level friend might be less intimidated in a more homogeneous setting. This supports what Archie has mentioned. Regardless, Natalie sees that cooperative learning is still important and is contented to be a role model for the less advanced students. So in the end, she is undecided whether the multi-level or the homogeneous level is preferable.

Since Mark and Rame, the higher level participants, notice that there is occasional tension among the levels, both comment that homogeneous classes run more smoothly. As an advanced level, occasionally Mark feels that he would prefer to be in a same level class because he wishes to be prepared for regular classes and the multi-level nature of the class slows his progress; however, he still appreciates the companionship and relaxed nature of the class which allows him to improve his speaking with the lower level classmates. Rame too states that she would prefer working with others who are at a similar level. In fact, if she had to choose between working with someone from her country versus someone at the same language ability level, she would choose the latter. In addition, Mark notes that the higher level learners are not the only ones feeling tension, but also, the lower level learners feel it. He describes how they feel intimidated with their higher level peers on occasion.

From Mr. Orellana’s perspective there are disadvantages of having a multi-level classroom. More specifically, he explains that the lower level students feel badly when they are unable to complete the assignments like their higher level classmates and the higher level students feel frustrated because the work is not always challenging. He calls for more
homogeneous blends: lower and middle level students grouped and higher level learners grouped. In spite of this, he still praises the multi-level classes for the benefits of cooperative learning and role modelling. Therefore, he calls for opportunities that periodically bring all levels together. It is interesting to note that even in the questionnaire, the higher level participants show agreement and disagreement with their preference for working with students who have the same level of English. Overwhelmingly, teachers in the questionnaire strongly show on two occasions that students prefer working with students who are at the same language ability level.

_Teachers may lose contact time with students_

Archie explains that the lower level students require the majority of the teacher’s attention because it is they who usually struggle with the work. In fact, after observing Archie, it appears that without the individual contact from his teacher, he is not likely to focus on his work since often he is left sitting and chatting with his fellow lower level peer. Moreover, Archie frequently feels shame when the lower level learners monopolize the teacher’s time and the higher level students are left to fend for themselves. Also, he sees the higher level learners as supports for the teacher when the teacher cannot meet all of the lower level students’ needs.

Both Bina and Natalie recognize that they occasionally need this individual attention although they try to be more independent than their lower level peers. Bina and Natalie highlight that this teacher assistance is especially necessary for those students who are new to Canada or the lower levels. In fact, Natalie mentions that the ESL teacher spends about 75-80% of his time moving around the class to support the lower level students with individual attention. Moreover, in the first observation, Bina had no contact with the teacher during the classroom because he focused on the lower level classmates only.

Like Bina and Natalie, Mark concludes that for the most part, the intermediate and higher level students can generally work without much teacher support; it is the beginner English language learners who get the majority of the teacher’s time. Mark points out that this stress on the teacher to support their lower level peers affects all aspects of the course including evaluation: the course progresses slowly and it is challenging for the teacher to meet all students’ needs. Rame too accepts that the lower level students need most of the teacher’s attention because of their inability to understand the work.
Similarly, Mr. Orellana estimates that he spends about 80% of his time with the lower level students. Occasionally, he feels down on himself because he cannot satisfy everybody’s needs in the room. In fact, he describes how his energy is depleted in a multi-level classroom. Also, although he realizes that the higher level learners can mainly do the classroom work with little assistance, he fears, however, that the higher level students have needs that extend beyond the classroom and he is not always available to address the higher level students’ personal needs. He often relies on the help of students when he cannot address everyone’s needs. In the questionnaire, teachers underscore their preoccupation with students receiving adequate attention from them.

Classroom management may be difficult

Throughout the observations, without the individual contact from his teacher, Archie is not likely to focus on his work; often he chats or jokes with his ESL A peer in Spanish. Also, he notices boredom and anger on the faces of the higher level students since they often finish their work early. He too gets frustrated in the room because he does not comprehend. In the observations, it is noted that some lower level learners get angry when the teacher does not address their immediate issues.

Bina says that a consequence of this individual support for lower level classmates is that often the others are not engaged; when this occurs, the more advanced level students frequently act out which causes classroom management issues for the teacher. For instance, Bina comments on how these more advanced students do not pay attention to the teacher because they are frustrated by the slow pace and begin to talk or play on the computer. Bina concurs that often all levels can be disruptive either due to their frustration of not understanding or to their boredom of being finished quickly. Since classroom management issues do arise, Natalie mentions that the teacher calls on the middle level or higher level students to assist their lower level peers so that the lower level students do not get distracted and the higher level learners also have something to do when they are finished their work before their lower level classmates.

Mark comments that although the teacher gives a great deal of support to the lower level peers, often his attention to them is not concerning academics, but rather it is about their behaviour. He explains that often the lower level learners are not focused on work possibly because they struggle with their language proficiency, and hence, get distracted. The result is that the teacher has to frequently discipline them. Moreover, Mark highlights that classroom
management challenges are not only caused by the lower level students but also by the higher level learners when they feel unchallenged by the work; they go to the computers without the teacher’s permission.

Mr. Orellana attributes a great deal of the classroom management issues to immaturity on the part of the high school students. In several observations, the lower level group acts out by kicking and pushing; however, the higher level students also disrupt by wandering, looking out of the window, and playing with basketballs. Mr. Orellana attributes this behaviour to the higher level learners often feeling frustrated when they wish to progress with their work and they frequently have to wait for their lower level classmates or support them. Mr. Orellana summarizes that the atmosphere in the classroom can be a “three-ring circus.” In the questionnaire, teachers acknowledge that students are often angry and bored because their needs are not met.

Activities may be limited

Archie, the lower level, acknowledges he has practically the same work as the other levels; he finds work difficult or boring since it is often repetitive. Moreover, he wishes for more speaking and group activities.

When asked about the work being essentially the same for all levels, Bina confirms that the work is similar and this causes pitfalls for the lower level students at times and frustrates the more advanced level learners at other times. Natalie verifies that typically the classroom work is the same, but the teacher occasionally varies the quantity of work for different levels. Moreover, both Bina and Natalie state that the work is often too simple for them and for Bina, this is concerning considering that they need to be prepared for regular classes. Natalie resents her feelings of boredom because often she is sitting and waiting for a new activity. They would prefer to engage in more speaking and group activities.

Mark indicates that the activities are the same for all levels and often, because of this, it is a challenge to meet everyone’s needs. Rame confirms that there is no distinction in the work for the different levels. She also stresses that it is challenging for the lower level classmates because of this; however, as advanced level students, they both feel held back.

In terms of the preparation, often Mr. Orellana feels pressured to create different evaluation tools to accommodate all levels; however, he knows that is not realistic. Also, with a multi-level class, he stresses about not having multiple activities in case some students who are
more advanced finish sooner than the lower level learners; however, he notes that in order to be prepared with this type of work, he needs to teach the course several times. Given these challenges of preparing work for a multi-level classroom, he figures that when he prepares the work for a multi-level classroom, he frequently cuts out a significant amount of the curriculum since it is often too advanced for the lower level peers. This means that the higher level students are often finished the work early and are granted free time in class whereby they are allowed to do other work or explore the Internet; however, he notes that they also feel annoyed when the work does not challenge them. Teachers in the questionnaire stress that often students’ academic needs are not met in multi-level settings.

*Students may have more opportunities for interaction*

Archie notes that about 90% of the time he does not volunteer answers because he feels occasionally shy, he does not understand the work in this setting, or he is uninterested. However, he believes that a benefit of cooperative learning for the higher level learners is that through helping the lower level peers, they get to practice their English through this group work.

At times, Bina and Natalie feel restricted in their progress since they have little to do and Bina worries about how her lack of engagement with the work will impact her in future classes. Regardless, Bina and Natalie enjoy having the opportunity to interact with their lower level peers when they finish their work. They value this opportunity to practice their oral communication because in this setting, they feel free to speak without being judged. Also, then, like Archie, Bina and Natalie too very much appreciate multiple opportunities to engage in a variety of speaking activities with their multicultural peer group. They see these opportunities for practicing as being beneficial for helping them to make friends, communicating with native speakers in future classes, and engaging in the community outside of school. However, as Archie mentioned, Natalie too notices that often the lower level classmates feel timid about speaking or reading out loud in the classroom.

Both Mark and Rame agree that the pace is far too slow for them and therefore, they do not have the interaction that they feel is necessary for them to be prepared for regular classrooms with native speakers. Despite their frustration, both Mark and Rame acknowledge that they still value speaking activities in their multi-level classroom because they do not feel judged on the quality of their speaking. They recognize that their speaking serves to support their social networks, co-curricular events, or community activities.
Mr. Orellana estimates that the lower level students’ disengagement occurs about 40% of the time. In all six observations, the lower level learners are seen to be disengaged. Mr. Orellana also explains that the lower level students feel badly when they are unable to complete the assignments like the higher level classmates: for that reason, Mr. Orellana stresses that it is especially important for the lower level learners to have opportunities to practice their speaking so their confidence increases. Given this empathy, he asks the higher level students engage in cooperative learning with their lower level peers. He acknowledges that this peer mentoring is also beneficial for the higher level learners’ speaking.

*Students may mix with other students from different cultures*

Archie envisions how learning to work in groups of people from diverse cultural backgrounds is beneficial to him outside of the classroom. He highlights that this is especially true for his employment.

In addition, both Bina and Natalie see their participation in group activities as opportunities for helping them to participate in clubs or sports at the school whereby they interact with people who they do not typically mix with in the room which gives them confidence to make new acquaintances in the school community. Bina clearly states one benefit of the multi-level class is that often students from different cultures mix, but Natalie also recognizes that this mixing of cultures could also happen in a more homogeneous language ability level classroom.

Mark too values mixing with different newcomers in the multi-level classroom and calls on other classes to address issues of immigration and multiculturalism so that students will be better equipped to interact in a multi-cultural setting such as Canada. Rame also values the opportunities she has to mix with different cultures in the multi-level classroom because she makes new friends.

Mr. Orellana values activities that link all English language learners to the multi-cultural community outside of the classroom. For example, in one unit, he asks students to teach the class about their first language and culture which then empowers students to connect with others outside of their first language culture. He believes that by doing these sorts of activities, students will develop an appreciation for living in a diverse society. However, like Natalie, Mr. Orellana states that the multi-level classroom is not a requirement for students from diverse backgrounds.
to mix. In the questionnaire, higher level respondents indicate strong agreement on two occasions that they appreciate the opportunity to work in a diverse setting.

*Teachers may be flexible in their curriculum design*

Although Mr. Orellana is forced to be flexible because of the diversity in language ability, whereby he cuts the curriculum, he knows that it is not in the best interests of his students. Students’ needs are not addressed by the curriculum in the multi-level classroom because Mr. Orellana cannot prepare curriculum that is diverse enough for students on either end of the language proficiency spectrum.

As mentioned, the student participants often are not satisfied with their work because it is either too difficult for the lower level students or too simplistic for the more advanced student learners. This underscores that students’ curricular needs are not being addressed and urges that the curriculum design is not adequate.

Mr. Orellana also stresses that, unlike adult ESL courses which have flexibility, secondary school ESL courses have a prescribed curriculum which puts more pressure on the teacher to adhere to a prescribed curriculum. Moreover, if the class is a prerequisite for another course, the pressure is even greater on the teacher to follow a set curriculum.

*Students may participate in self-directed learning with peer assistance*

Archie describes cooperative learning as a positive experience in the multi-level classroom whereby he gains self-confidence because the higher level students act as role models, have become his friends, and help him primarily with his speaking in terms of corrective feedback. His first language is used as a tool to scaffold this learning. Archie also notes that the teacher needs the help of peer assistants. Moreover, it was noted in many of the observations and in some of Archie’s comments that he chose to engage in self-directed learning of Spanish rather than the intended curriculum; he helps a lower level with English while the lower level speaks in Spanish to Archie. In contrast, observations showed that many of the lower level students cannot engage in self-directed learning with peer assistance; they need individual attention from the teacher.

Bina and Natalie, the middle level students, easily finish the classroom work and then choose to participate in cooperative learning as peer assistants and role models to lower level learners; this is driven by their empathy and their desire to be engaged in the classroom. In fact, it is a main focal point for both Bina and Natalie in the multi-level classroom especially when
they have completed their work. They work in conjunction with Mr. Orellana whereby he calls upon them when he is unable to reach all students who need support. Natalie uses her first language to help the lower level students. Furthermore, their choice to engage in mentoring could be seen as self-directed learning because they too benefit from the experience by practicing their oral communication skills. Hence, there is reciprocity. Yet, Bina underscores that some of the higher level learners are not empathetic with the lower level students and therefore, they are not interested in providing peer assistance.

Despite this group cohesion, the fact remains that Mark and Rame do have different levels of empathy and their willingness to engage in cooperative learning is proportional to their empathy for their lower level classmates. Mark wishes to help because he has been in “their shoes” and he also wishes to practice his speaking and increase the pace of the course. He figures that if he helps, the lower level peers will progress faster and the course will move along more quickly; therefore, his learning environment will improve. Throughout the cooperative learning, he notes that it is often the lower level classmates who ask for support from the higher level students when they are struggling with the course work. Occasionally, some of the higher level learners volunteer to assist the lower level classmates or the teacher requests their assistance. Like Bina, Mark highlights that not all of the higher level students feel the same desire to assist their lower level peers; he explains it is a low percentage. Often the higher level students get annoyed with the lower level peers because many higher level learners want to focus on advancing themselves in their written work rather than mentoring the lower level classmates.

In fact, Rame feels what Mark has described: she has mixed emotions about supporting the lower level students and would prefer to relax. Therefore, she chooses to ignore them as much as she helps them; however, if she helps them, she uses her first language as a tool.

To begin, Mr. Orellana believes that empathy is a driving force behind peer mentoring. In addition, like Rame and Mark, he describes that there are also higher level students who do not wish to engage with the lower level learners. Therefore, peer assistance is not always available. He explains that there also are more advanced students who often work with “peer assistance” and with little support from him; however, he acknowledges that one danger of counting on the higher level students to self-monitor is that if they lose their focus, he may not notice until a great deal of time has passed. Also, Mr. Orellana notes some advanced students completely refuse to participate when the activity is too easy; he has to sit next to them for them
to participate. Hence, self-directed learning is not a given in the classroom regardless whether there is peer assistance needed or not. In the questionnaire, higher level participants reveal that they can work independently with little help from the teacher. Teachers in the questionnaire acknowledge the important role of peer assistance in the multi-level classroom.

Emerging Themes

In this section, the three themes in the case study data which go beyond the multi-level language ability groupings literature are presented. They include the following: the ESL teacher is a friend; the ESL teacher spends more individual time with students than a regular teacher; first or shared languages serve as scaffolding tools for peer mentoring. All participants show agreement with these themes (see Table 8). It should be mentioned that since the questionnaire is based on the literature review on multi-level classrooms, no reference to the questionnaire is made in this section because data emerged from the case study participants.

Table 8: Emerging themes in data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Lower Level Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Middle Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Teacher Case Study Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL teacher is a friend</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL teacher spends more individual time with students than a regular teacher</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First or shared languages serve as scaffolding tools for peer mentoring</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ESL teacher is a friend**

Archie views his teacher not only as a primary resource for information regarding curricular activities, but also for co-curricular involvement. In fact, he feels that he can go to his teacher before his friends if he has a problem. He explains that his teacher is often better than his friends because he is more supportive. He imagines that even if he were on a school team, his teacher coach would be the person who would make him feel comfortable.

Bina is outspoken about her feelings of friendship for her ESL teacher. Like Archie, she would prefer to ask him for support over her friends. Not only does she approach him for herself, but she also confidently approaches him out of concern for others; she requests that the
ESL teacher provide different forms of evaluation for the lower level classmates. Similarly, Natalie comments on feeling understood by her teacher. This feeling of being understood leads them to confidently approach their ESL teacher with concerns both within and beyond the ESL classroom.

In addition, Mark is very clear in that he sees his ESL teachers as friends as compared to his other teachers. He feels comfortable approaching his current ESL teacher with any questions not just course-related topics; however, he highlights that often students take advantage of the teacher’s kindness. Rame also states that she values her ESL teacher’s support over her friends. She too states that she feels free to ask him questions that go beyond the scope of the multi-level classroom because she is comfortable with him.

Mr. Orellana acknowledges that his relationship with English language learners is close in that he shares the common experience of immigration. He believes that since they know that he has also been an immigrant, they feel a special connection to him and they see him as non-threatening; however, students sometimes take advantage of this relationship. Moreover, he repeats this sentiment in his first journal whereby he states that his bond with English language learners is greater than his bond with native speaker students.

ESL teacher spends more individual time with students than a regular teacher

When Archie considers his overall experience with his ESL teacher, he highlights a preference for a teacher-focussed individual attention in both curricular and co-curricular issues. By providing this assistance, he recognizes that his teacher in the multi-level classroom spends more time with individual students than teachers in regular classrooms. Archie especially appreciates the corrective feedback for his speaking from his teacher.

Bina and Natalie equally note that this individual support tends to also be in the form of the ESL teacher approaching the students: according to Bina, the ESL teacher “checks in” with students. Furthermore, they indicate that the ESL teacher tends to spend more time with each student than other teachers. Likewise, Natalie describes how the teacher gives attention to detail and individual attention through not only speaking to students, but also by checking their nonverbal communication.

Both of the higher level students also underscore that their ESL teacher makes a great effort to talk to students individually. Mark emphasizes that individual support is higher in the multi-level classroom than in regular classes when asked if the ESL teacher supports all of the
students. Mark says that the ESL teacher checks on students about 80% of the time; hence, the teacher is in constant motion in the classroom.

Moreover, Mr. Orellana too describes the important nurturing role of the ESL teacher. He aims to create a safe space for English language learners where they can practice their speaking, ask questions, and learn about Canadian culture; he believes this caring environment is especially important for the lower level learners: considering his very deep concern for his students, it is not surprising that one of his preoccupations is that he provides enough individual attention to all of his students. He acknowledges that he spends much more individual time with his English language learners than students in his regular classrooms.

*First or Shared Languages serve as scaffolding tools for peer mentoring*

Archie highlights that one tool that facilitates the cooperative learning is the use of students’ first languages for clarification of work. Also, he happily notes that another use of his first language is that the higher level students who share his first language are able to correct his speaking in English. Moreover, he sits with a peer who speaks a shared language, Spanish, which allows him continued practice in this language and enables him to voice his opinions since he feels more comfortable in Spanish than in English.

Both Bina and Natalie recognize the importance of using a first or shared language as a tool for cooperative learning. In fact, they notice that often their teacher calls upon them to use their first language to assist lower level peers. Regardless, Natalie underscores that it must not be used continuously in the classroom since students’ English language learning may be negatively impacted.

Similarly, Rame states one tool that is useful when she helps the lower level students is the use of her first language. In addition, although she is at a higher level, she still appreciates support in her first language especially since she has just arrived. Mark also notes that he does not share his first language with anyone else in the classroom, but he acknowledges that it is a useful tool to support learning.

As well, Mr. Orellana mentions that when the lower level students struggle, it is common that they seek the support of higher level classmates who share their first language and these students often become their mentors.
Data Situated Through the Lenses of the Two Conceptual Frameworks

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation

This section situates the data in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation framework. Factors which enhance and inhibit participation are underscored through providing case study participant data and questionnaire data (see Table 9).

Table 9: Data situated in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Lower Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Lower Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Teacher Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Teacher Questionnaire Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Factors PRIMARY FACTORS</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self/Peers</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage in Cooperative Learning (High)</td>
<td>Engage in Cooperative Learning (High)</td>
<td>Engage in Cooperative Learning (Low)</td>
<td>Engage in Cooperative Learning (High)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhibiting Factors PRIMARY FACTORS</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Self/Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Factors</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Peers/ Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Speakers-Language Barriers (Co-curricular/ Community)</td>
<td>Native Speakers-Language Barriers (Co-curricular/ Community)</td>
<td>Native Speakers-Language Barriers (Co-curricular/ Community)</td>
<td>Native Speakers-Language Barriers (Co-curricular/ Community)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job (Co-curricular)</td>
<td>Family (Community)</td>
<td>Job (Curricular/ Co-curricular)</td>
<td>Family/Self (Curricular/ Co-curricular)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The multi-level classroom can be seen as a community of practice for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation is a process
in which students feel included in a community of practice. The two conditions for legitimate peripheral participation are peripherality and legitimacy. When students are immersed in a context which enables them to gradually ease into their new setting, they have peripherality. Legitimacy means that newcomers are provided with opportunities to participate as valued members of the community of practice. Hence, students are in a supportive context where there is “mutual engagement in shared activities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 184). More specifically, Wenger (1998) states the learning architecture for legitimate peripheral participation or the conditions for legitimacy and peripherality include opportunities for student engagement, imagination, and alignment in a community of practice. Again, engagement means that they are able to participate in meaningful work and interactions which are authentic to them. Imagination allows for them to connect their present activity to future endeavours. Alignment opportunities nourish students’ abilities to see how they could share in a common goal to support a bigger cause. By having this experience, students then engage in “a special context for learning and identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 185).

In the case studies, students generally feel conditions for these three modes of belonging as they are supported by their role-model peers and teacher as they engage in cooperative learning and speaking activities in groups. Hence, there is support for their communicative competence in a nourishing context (Wenger, 1998). Yet, there are times when they choose to disconnect from these activities either due to their own frustration with the course work, their lack of language proficiency or their outside commitments. Even though there are moments when the context does not nurture them or they feel disengaged, it does not restrict their freedom to self-regulate (imagination/alignment) in order to create their own experience of legitimate peripheral participation if they so choose. Most of the participants in this case study indicate that this self-regulation does occur. In fact, not only do they self-regulate when they feel disengaged, they also self-regulate on a regular basis in the multi-level classroom. They include goals of engagement, imagination, and alignment in their learning repertoire because the multi-level classroom provides them with this individual freedom to take control of their own learning and make connections between the present and future. Hence, they list themselves as the main enhancing and inhibiting factors in their learning. Likewise, in the questionnaire, the highest weighted response indicates that higher level participants also list themselves as the primary factor in increasing or decreasing their participation; this participation is supported by the degree
to which they feel a sense of community with their teacher and peers. The next highest weighted student responses stress their satisfaction with their involvement in the school and the community and their desire to make connections between their classroom experience and this involvement. In the questionnaire, the teachers mirror the exact responses of the higher level participants. This is clearly noteworthy.

**Lower Level Student.** Archie lists his peers and in particular, activities which focus on cooperative learning, and speaking along with his teacher as significant factors for enhancing his participation; however, he insists it is he who drives his participation whereby he makes links between his present context and his future possibilities.

To begin, his peers have become not only his friends who offer him support with his speaking and group work skills in a nurturing environment, but also his role models. They encourage him to improve his English because he imagines that they understand his struggle because they too were once lower level students and he aspires to achieve their level of English. Although he is a lower level student, Archie too inspires other lower level learners to better their English. He notes that shared or first languages serve as a key tool for supporting others. Likewise, his teacher supports him in his ability to see possible trajectories for his co-curricular options by engaging him in a variety of projects which are linked to co-curricular opportunities. His own desire to make these links drives his learning. Therefore, when he engages in group work and speaking activities, he imagines how he can extend these skills into mainstream culture: he pictures that when he acquires language proficiency like his peers and proficiency in group activities, he envisions that his employment opportunities will be better. This image pleases him since through employment, he supports his family.

Conversely, the factors which negatively affect his participation in the multi-level classroom are course work, employment, and himself. With the course work, he feels uninterested because of its focus on reading and its repetitive nature; this lowers his desire to participate in the multi-level classroom. Similarly, to a lesser extent, his shyness with his teacher reduces his participation. His timid nature detracts from his engagement because he is not able to form an interpersonal relationship with his teacher. Yet, to counteract his frustration, and shyness, he creates a new focus for himself: he concentrates on improving his Spanish speaking skills; he pairs himself with a Spanish native speaker in the multi-level classroom in order to improve his Spanish. He appreciates this connection because he has found a new friend and he
sees that this will ultimately help him with future employment opportunities either in a Spanish-speaking store in Canada or in a future relocation to Spain. Finally, he lists his own desire to be employed as a priority that may negatively influence his time for studies or co-curricular activities.

**Middle Level Students.** Similar to Archie, Bina and Natalie identify their peers, and their engagement in cooperative learning and speaking activities as positive factors for their participation; moreover, they also appreciate the support of their teacher; however, throughout all of this, they recognize it is they who drive their participation as they link their present context with future contexts and ultimately, build their confidence.

Both women acknowledge that their cooperative learning roles where they peer mentor, and engage in speaking activities help them to not only support their lower level peers with whom they empathize, but they are conscious that this engagement also helps them to confidently participate in speaking and group activities not only in the school community as club participants, but also outside in the community as translators or guides for their family or as competent citizens who live and work in a multicultural society. They note the benefit of being multilingual when they are engaging in peer mentoring because often they use their first languages to support the lower level students. Bina and Natalie also say that in their peer group, whereby everyone shares the common goal of improving their English, they feel secure to express themselves in a variety of speaking and group activities because they do not fear judgment in this environment. To a lesser extent than Archie, in this nourishing environment for engagement, both Bina and Natalie aspire to be more language proficient like their more advanced peers, and they reflect on their possible roles they could assume as more proficient speakers both inside and outside of the classroom. Hence, the classroom is a practice space for communication where often the friendships go well beyond the classroom into the community. As well, by having caring ESL teachers who encourage and reassure them, they see themselves as safe to participate in the multi-level classroom.

On the contrary, Bina and Natalie list themselves, their boredom with the course work, and their fear of judgement by more proficient English speakers as being the three principal factors which limit their participation; also, Bina lists that her family often inhibits her participation. To begin, both note that it is they who do not want participate at times due to exhaustion or lack of confidence. In addition, for Bina and Natalie, boredom means that often
they are disengaged in their work because they find it too simple and they are left with nothing to do in terms of curricular activities; the course work is more geared for the lower level learners rather than the intermediate level students like Bina and Natalie and as a result, the pace is too slow for them. Regardless, they make the best of the situation: their own desire to participate leads them to imagine new roles for themselves within the classroom beyond their roles as students: they imagine new roles as peer mentors or role models for the lower level classmates which are encouraged by their ESL teacher who needs assistance. Through these new roles, Bina and Natalie reflect on the possibilities of meeting new people, assuming similar leadership positions in co-curricular activities such as the Ambassadors’ Club or cultural clubs where they will confidently interact with other English language learners. Bina lists that this ability to reflect on new possibilities for herself beyond the classroom allows her to feel more connected with the English language learners’ community as a whole because she recognizes that she will be a role model for the lower level peers. Moreover, through these roles in which they are able to practice their speaking, group work, and leadership skills, Bina and Natalie will ultimately improve their communicative competence and understanding of cultural norms; this will help them to become competent students in future classes and better citizens in their new land. Also, when Bina and Natalie are engaged with native speakers beyond the classroom they stress their fear of speaking. Finally, Bina points out that family restrictions can also limit one’s ability to participate both in and outside of the classroom.

**Higher Level Students.** Mark and Rame indicate the secondary factors which contribute to their participation are their peers, cooperative learning, and group speaking activities. It is important to note that these secondary factors strengthen their already developed strong oral skills and sense of self-confidence. However, the greatest factor impacting their participation in the multi-level classroom is their own initiative; their self-confidence due to their advanced level of English status leads them to confidently envision connections between their present context and future contexts.

To begin, simply by being with lower level peers, their advanced English language learner status is reinforced which makes them feel confident. To encourage participation for all levels, occasionally, Mark undertakes a peer tutoring role which aids not only the lower level classmates since Mark feels empathy for them, but he realizes that it is also better for him: the class progresses more smoothly and he improves his communication skills which ultimately help
him attain his academic goals. He notes the challenges as a peer mentor when he does not speak the native languages of the people he supports. As well, Mark and Rame’s sense of confidence is heightened because when they speak in this environment, it is non-threatening because no one judges their language proficiency. In fact, they are admired. Therefore, like the other participants, Mark and Rame also see the multi-level classroom as a practice space for developing communicative competence in which they choose to make connections between their present work and future possibilities. They provide great detail about these connections.

In the school, Mark imagines how his continued speaking practice and growing self-confidence will prepare him better for interacting with native speakers in regular classes or co-curricular activities. Also, he is sure that the nurturing spirit that he receives from many of his English language learner peers makes him believe that if he were to join a co-curricular activity with them, he would continue to feel welcomed. Rame too values her socializing in the multi-level classroom as a tool which enables her to see herself increasingly more successful in making friends and possibly involving herself in co-curricular activities; besides her own feeling of self-assurance due to her advanced English level, her continued ability to speak in a safe environment, and her knowledge of diversity make her feel empowered. In the community outside of school, Mark and Rame highlight that they speak more freely because of their own initiative and self-confidence, but also because they use the classroom as a rehearsal for their interaction with native speakers; this helps them to see themselves in the future as confident people who can easily interact with native speakers in a variety of situations such as in their neighbourhood or employment. The multi-level classroom also provides friendships for Mark and Rame that extend into the community.

On the other hand, Mark and Rame both state that primarily it is their own frustration around the course work that leads them to not want to participate in the multi-level classroom: it is too simple and slow for them and the lower levels disrupt the classroom because they struggle with the work. Due to this simplistic nature of the work or the slow pace of the work due in part to the presence of the lower level students in the multi-level classroom, they sometimes imagine that they may not be prepared for regular courses or mainstream society. Moreover, they worry that this lack of preparation will cause them to remain timid when they engage with native English speakers. In order to better the situation, Mark invents a new role for himself in the multi-level classroom: peer tutor. As mentioned, he assumes the role of peer tutor primarily to
increase the pace of the class: he will benefit because more work will be covered so that he too can feel challenged and then more prepared for his future role in regular classes and mainstream society; however, minor benefits are he is happy to support the lower level learners because he understands how they need a role model and he enjoys making friends and practicing his speaking and group work skills in doing so. Moreover, he also suggests a new seating plan to better the flow of the class. In contrast, when Rame is frustrated, she occasionally disengages in the class. She does not attempt to make the situation better for herself by imagining a new role for herself. As a result, she simply worries that she will become a lazy person due to the inappropriate work. She changes her focus from thinking of her academic plans to planning for a minimum wage job in order to support her family.

**Teacher.** Mr. Orellana cites the main contributing factors to their participation are the students, themselves. Then, he mentions the importance of comfort level in the classroom with their peers and teacher. Through this nurturing environment, he highlights the important role of cooperative learning which benefits both the higher and lower level students. He underscores the value of using first or shared languages as scaffolding tools in this mentoring. Moreover, Mr. Orellana recognizes the importance of these relationships because he sees how they extend far beyond the classroom into co-curricular events such as the ESL Ambassadors’ Club or sports teams and community activities; moreover, students often can imagine themselves engaging in these venues because their friends are there; a safe social network has been created. In fact, it is this point that Mr. Orellana sees as the key factor for students’ participation: students’ ability to link work in the multi-level classroom to other contexts whereby they see themselves in other roles. In other words, they can imagine how their activities at the moment can help them in other ways in the future. Tied to this, he states that work should engage students in opportunities to communicate in real contexts which nourish speaking skills with their more advanced peers who serve as role models; hence, students can use the classroom work to develop confidence for other environments; they can reflect on themselves as competent speakers in and out of the school. Moreover, in order to develop greater communicative competence, Mr. Orellana calls for students to engage in group work with students from diverse backgrounds; this will foster their understanding of Canada’s diverse population so that they will be better prepared to interact in this context both within the classroom and in the community as whole; students can imagine how
they will be open to working with a variety of ethnic groups both in co-curricular and employment opportunities.

In contrast, Mr. Orellana lists the course material as being the major factor inhibiting students’ participation. All levels are not provided with appropriate work; hence, they feel dissatisfied. This is exacerbated by him not having enough time to reach all of the students and his inability to use their first languages as a scaffolding tool. Moreover, he states that conflicts among peers can also be an inhibiting factor, although in this particular class that is not the case. Furthermore, he sees the lack of participation in the multi-level classroom as impacting their participation in other contexts: their language proficiency is thwarted. In addition, he views the lack of information available to students in the classroom regarding opportunities to participate in other contexts as inhibiting their participation in the school and community; the information is usually relayed through an intercom and many students cannot understand. In response to the challenges of addressing students’ needs, he urges for continued activities which help them to make connections between their participation in the multi-level classroom and the world outside of the classroom. Through these sorts of activities, students will envision new paths for themselves. Mr. Orellana especially encourages language proficiency activities such as students engaging in authentic conversations with peers or role playing possible scenarios such as getting involved in co-curricular activities where they can develop their social networks. Also, he urges for information about activities to be delivered not only through announcements, but also explained by more language proficient peers or offered in a written form so that English language learners will better understand the possibilities that exist for them in the community. In addition, Mr. Orellana pushes for continued course work which promotes tolerance, and respect for different cultures through such avenues as inviting guest speakers. He sees this as key to students understanding their future roles as Canadian citizens. Although he promotes these activities, he also admits that the multi-level nature of the class does not always allow him nor students to effectively engage in these activities which promote students’ imagination of links to other contexts. It is for this reason that he also calls for English language learners to be grouped in different multi-level groupings. He proposes that the lower and middle level students be grouped together, but to separate the higher level learners of the ESL Ds and ESL Es. Finally, one last factor that could inhibit participation is family culture values or personal issues.
Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation: Actional Phase

This section uses the lens of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) conceptual framework to examine the data. In particular, the enhancing and inhibiting factors on participant motivation are stressed by highlighting case study participant data and online questionnaire data (see Table 10).

Table 10: Data situated in Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation: Actional Phase Main Motivational Influences framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Lower Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Lower Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Middle Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Questionnaire Participants</th>
<th>Teacher Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Teacher Questionnaire Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Factors</td>
<td><strong>PRIMARY FACTORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Secondary Factors</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
<td>Preference for Speaking in Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inhibiting Factors</td>
<td><strong>PRIMARY FACTORS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Secondary Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course Work</td>
<td>Frustrated with Lower Levels</td>
<td>Frustrated with Lower Levels</td>
<td>Skill Barrier</td>
<td>Language Barriers Co-curricular /Community</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The multi-level classroom can be seen as the milieu for the Actional phase of Dörnyei and Ottó’s motivational model (1998). This phase in the model focuses on students’ evaluation of their learning environment with respect to their learning, their appraisal of the environment, and their ability to employ control mechanisms to enhance their learning. The evaluation is based on several “executive motivational influences.”
With the case study participants, the most applicable influences are the “quality of learning experience”, “the teacher’s motivational influence”, “the performance appraisal and reward structure/classroom goal structure”, “the influence of the learner group”, “the sense of autonomy”, and “the self-regulatory strategies.” Overall, the “quality of learning experience” is both positive and negative, although students prefer to remain in the class despite unpleasant moments due primarily to the course work; hence overall, they feel more positively than negatively in the multi-level classroom; the “teacher’s motivational influence” is positive; “the performance appraisal and reward structure/classroom goal structure” is cooperative although tension exists between the more advanced students and the lower level learners; the “influence of the learner group” is generally supportive; the “sense of autonomy” is quite high given the flexibility available for students to engage in their “self-regulatory strategies.” When facing demotivating circumstances such as with the course work, they also actively self-regulate within the class to create roles to support their future aspirations. By drawing on the work of Wolters (2003), Dörnyei (2005) highlights that when students encounter obstacles in their classroom work, their ability to “remain in control of their attitudinal/motivational disposition should be seen as an important determinant of self-regulated learning and achievement” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 91). Moreover, what is more interesting with these participants is that they regularly use self-regulation to envision connections between their work to future possibilities which are linked with the shared goals of their peers and family. In the questionnaire, higher level participants also indicate that the motivating factors for their learning are themselves followed by their peers and teacher. Their highest weighted response shows that they strongly agree that they motivate themselves when the classroom is not engaging because they recognize it is important for their future. Also, in group work, they appreciate when they engage in group tasks that their peers are working at the same level. As well, they strongly affirm that the individualized attention from their teacher motivates them too. It must be noted that this echoes their response for the primary factors which influence their participation in the multi-level classroom. Teachers in the questionnaire stress teachers and peers influence whether the multi-level classroom enhances students’ motivation.

**Lower Level Student.** Archie’s responses to questions based on the motivating factors in the “Actional Phase” regarding his language learning in the multi-level classroom parallel many of his answers given for the participation questions in the multi-level classroom. Once again, he
lists his peer group, but ultimately, himself, as the main influence on his motivation. He states that his peer group positively influences his motivation to learn English and other shared languages because they offer him friendship and role models who can help him to foster communicative competence by providing opportunities to practice and receive feedback; the lower level learners imagine themselves to be like the more advanced students while the higher level learners empathize with them by recalling their past experiences; this ability to project and recall shows self-regulation. When considering the “Actional Phase main motivational influences”, Archie’s experience can fall under three categories: the quality of the learning experience is pleasant; the performance appraisal/classroom goal structure is cooperative; the influence of the learner group is peer role modeling. Moreover, he feels that he can extend this knowledge to engage in the community outside of school. This feeling of being able to see the possibilities of his learning in other contexts where he can see “a possible self” (Dörnyei, 2005) is also a main motivational influence of the Actional Phase: his knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies.

From this, he concludes that he is the primary source of his motivation. For example, if he is “sad,” “tired” or “bored” due to the fact that the work is not addressing his ability level, he is demotivated; however, despite this, he still very much wants to be in the classroom due to the support from his peers and he reminds himself of how his interaction with them can be connected to his future goals. This ability to maintain his motivation through times when he feels disengaged again stresses the importance of self-regulation: again he values his opportunities to communicate and to engage in group work; he appreciates practicing his third language with a peer. As well, the “Actional Phase main motivational influence” of sense of autonomy is also present in his ability to engage in self-regulation by assuming a new role within the classroom.

**Middle Level Students.** Bina and Natalie’s responses to the motivating factors in the “Actional Phase” match many of the factors which positively and negatively impact their participation in the multi-level class. In terms of the positive motivating factors, the two middle level participants list that they, themselves, are motivated by their opportunities to freely engage in speaking and group activities. During these activities, they are further motivated by their peers who do not judge their English language proficiency and who often act as mentors; their peer group has become their friends; they empathize with each other and through this, demonstrate their ability to self-regulate their learning. Likewise, their ability to link their
speaking group activities to other contexts shows self-regulated learning. Given these responses, when considering the “Actional Phase” motivating influences, the following influences are the most applicable to Bina and Natalie’s responses: the quality of the learning experience is mainly positive, the performance appraisal and reward structure/classroom goal structure is cooperative, and the influence of the learner group/classroom climate is supportive.

On the other hand, they are demotivated by the work which is simplistic and slow and by the disruptive nature of the class. To counteract this, both girls create the role of mentor in order to find a purpose for themselves in the classroom. Moreover, their teacher supports their decision and comes to expect them in this role. This new role allows for them to feel motivated because they review their work, they improve their communication skills with a variety of learners, they help maintain order in a challenging classroom and they help the lower level peers by serving as role models. Ultimately, they envision that this experience will help them in other contexts outside of the multi-level classroom. The importance of this self-motivation is highlighted by Bina when she indicates that her desire to participate is primarily based on her own initiative. Natalie too lists herself as the primary motivator for her participation in the multi-level classroom; her mood largely impacts her motivation. In other words, they self-regulate which is one other motivating influence in the “Actional Phase.” However, the ability to assume a new role in the classroom also requires the “Actional Phase main motivational influence” of sense of autonomy.

**Higher Level Students.** When reviewing Mark and Rame’s answers to the motivation questions related to the “Actional Phase” (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998), the commonalities between these answers and their comments on their participation in the multi-level classroom are striking. Again, both Mark and Rame list themselves the key factor in their motivation along with their appreciation of a non-threatening learning environment. To begin, Mark mentions that he interacts very little with the teacher and it is he who pushes himself to improve his communication. Likewise, Rame states that she drives herself to compete with other higher level students in the class because she admires their language proficiency. Hence, both Mark and Rame are self-motivated and appreciative that the multi-level classroom provides a non-pressured learning environment in which they are free to express themselves since their peers are generally empathetic with each other because they recall their own challenges; moreover this often places the higher level students in the place of role models for the lower level learners. In
addition, Mark is motivated by practicing his speaking because he sees that he needs to improve his communication for when he works with native speakers and also, by knowing that through his speaking, he also supports the other students in the English language learner “family.” He recognizes that they all share a common goal of integrating into Canadian society: he feels a sense of duty. At the onset, since Rame is a recent arrival, she also is quite motivated by opportunities to speak like her already advanced peers and by her high grades which affirm her overall communicative competence. As well, like Mark, she is motivated by having nurturing peers in the multi-level classroom who help her to learn about Canadian life. Through making connections to other roles, both Mark and Rame demonstrate self-regulatory behaviour.

In contrast, their frustration with their peers’ attitudes toward the course work and the quality of the course work demotivates them: the lower level students do not take the work seriously even when it is simplified for them. Moreover, Rame gets demotivated by activities that require physical activity and she is hesitant to involve herself. This means that the class lags with modified work and this especially makes Mark worry about his own preparation for future classes, and his ability to interact confidently with native speakers in a variety of contexts: he feels held back. Rame dislikes the work and the lower level peers’ attitudes toward the work to such a degree that she would rather not work with them even if they are from her former country; she is especially frustrated by the fact that they expect her to do the work when they are in groups. In terms of the focus of the curriculum, they would appreciate more material linked to native speakers so that they feel that they are progressing in their ability to integrate into Canadian society. In particular, Mark wishes for a heavier workload that parallels native classes while Rame wants a focus on learning new vocabulary. Mark attempts to remedy the situation by serving as a peer mentor for the lower level classmates and by proposing a different seating arrangement that would better control the lower level students’ behaviour by separating them and placing them with more advanced learners who could act as role models. Therefore, with these actions, his intentions are that there would be better work environment for all; he is especially interested in that for himself and the other more advanced English language learners. In contrast, Rame is so demotivated by the lower level peers’ behaviour and the work that she disengages from both. She does not self-regulate like Mark who proposes a means to better the situation for himself in the classroom. Instead, she disconnects due to her discontent and focuses her energy on her family’s immediate financial needs. Hence, when examining Mark and Rame’s responses
with reference to the “Actional Phase” motivating influences, the following influences are most applicable: the quality of the learning experience is both positive and negative, the performance appraisal and reward structure/classroom goal structure is somewhat cooperative, the influence of the learner group/classroom climate is both supportive and unsupportive and the use of self-regulatory strategies and sense of autonomy is high for Mark and low for Rame.

Teacher. Likewise, when reviewing Mr. Orellana’s responses to students’ motivation in the multi-level classroom, the similarities are obvious when compared to his comments on students’ participation. He lists their motivation is largely related to their own self-motivation enhanced by the supportive environment created by him and their peers who empathize with each other, who serve as role models, and who often engage in peer mentoring which benefits not only the mentee, but also the mentor; however, he acknowledges due to the multi-level nature of the classroom, not everyone’s needs are met; he explains that this requires students to be self-motivated. He acknowledges that some of his students are capable of this.

Thus, when the work frustrates both the lower and higher level students and they become demotivated, he generates contexts which he hopes will nourish students’ self-motivation. Similar to what he explained about encouraging participation, he mentions that self-motivation can be enhanced through him providing a nurturing learning environment which engages students in making connections between what they do in the classroom to what they can possibly do outside of the classroom. Therefore, he is eager to engage students in course work which develops their language proficiency in authentic conversations with their peers where often the more advanced students act a peer mentors. Likewise, by inviting guest speakers to the classroom to discuss multiculturalism helps students to see their role as citizens of ethnically rich country. He stresses that making these connections is especially important because even the higher level learners feel language barriers when interacting with native speakers.

However, as with his comments on participation, Mr. Orellana notes that students’ self-motivation does not always sustain them in the multi-level classroom. It is for this reason that again he proposes dividing the class into lower level with middle level students and higher level peers would be separate in order to provide a context which could better address the needs of all students and hence, they would feel more motivated. However, he stresses occasional meetings with all levels for students would be beneficial for peer mentoring or role modelling. Overall, when placing Mr. Orellana’s answers through the lens of the “Actional Phase” motivating
influences, “the quality of the learning experience” is both positive and negative, the performance appraisal and reward structure/classroom goal structure is cooperative and slightly competitive (his time for individual students), the influence of the learner group/classroom climate is both supportive and unsupportive and the sense of autonomy and the use of self-regulatory strategies is mixed; some students engage in them, but some do not.

Connecting the two conceptual frameworks

After reviewing the participant responses based on questions linked to the two conceptual frameworks, it is obvious that many of the answers to the participation and motivation questions are similar or identical. Hence, a connection can be made between the two models. The common enhancing factors for participation are self, peers, varying degrees of cooperative learning, preference for speaking in groups and teacher. The common inhibiting factors for participation are self, course work, and native speakers or having language barriers beyond the classroom. For the Archie and Rame employment may inhibit participation in co-curricular activities while Bina and Mr. Orellana indicate family restrictions as inhibiting. On a similar note, when considering the responses to questions about the motivating factors in the “Actional Phase” the following factors are considered motivating all participants: self, peers, and teacher. The student participants also indicated that they have a preference for speaking in groups. Again, Bina and Natalie also describe cooperative learning as motivating. In terms of the demotivating factors all participants highlighted course work. It is notable that Natalie, Mark, and Rame underscore their frustration with the lower level students as a demotivating factor.

Given these similarities, it is noteworthy that the most overwhelming commonality embedded in the participants’ responses regarding their participation and motivation and listed as the primary factor for both participation and motivation is they, themselves. That is, their own ability to determine their participation or motivation. It is their ability to make connections among their present self to past selves or future selves which makes them feel positively about their participation; it is to self-regulate their motivation whereby they have “knowledge of or skills in language learning strategies, goal-setting strategies or motivation maintenance strategies” (Dörnyei, 20010, p. 98). Dörnyei (2005) identifies this learner “motivational self-regulation” as an important new area of research in educational psychology: “…self-regulation has been conceptualized to also include motivational self-regulation besides the cognitive and metacognitive components” (p. 91). In his discussion, it is important to note that he mentions the
work of Norton (2001) and Wenger (1998) to link self-regulation with “imagination” which he calls “possible selves.” Here he sees an interface occurring between personality and motivational psychology:

I believe that possible selves offer the most powerful, and at the same time most versatile, motivational self-mechanism, representing the individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming…Thus, possible selves are specific representations of one’s self in future states, involving thoughts, images, and senses, and are in many ways the manifestations, or personalized carriers, of one’s goals and aspiration (and fears, of course). (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 99)

Moreover, it is significant that the data also shows that students’ ability to imagine is linked to their alignment. “Alignment” brings learners together for a common goal, or to “form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions, and practices” (Wenger, 1998, p. 179). Dörnyei (2005) also mentions “it may be also useful to consider Wenger’s (1998) conceptualization of ‘alignment’ more closely” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 108). He concludes that more research is needed on imagination and alignment:

The crucial question from our perspective is how imagination and alignments interact. Wenger gave some guidelines when he stated that imagination can change by our understanding of alignment and our ability to control it because imagination helps to build a picture of how our part fits. (p. 109)

More recently, Dörnyei and Ushioda’s anthology (2009) draws on some elements of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) research on community of practice and the process of legitimate peripheral participation. As mentioned previously, in the chapter on the L2 Self Motivational System, Dörnyei (2009) cites Wenger (1998) while discussing the “prominent place of imagery in possible selves’ theory” (p. 16). Likewise, it is noteworthy to review Ushioda’s “person-in-context relational view” of motivation in relation to the community of practice framework:

[It is] a focus on the agency of the individual person…with an identity… a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective agent and the fluidity and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences, and multiple micro- and macro- contexts in which the person is embedded…” (p. 220)

In her discussion, Ushioda (2009) lists community of practice and situated learning as being theoretical frameworks “… which may usefully inform a more contextually embedded relational
view of motivation and identity” (p. 220). Ushioda (2009) refers to Toohey’s (2000) community of practice research which clearly draws on Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s work. Ushioda (2009) continues to stress that this framework “… has significant potential to illuminate a contextually grounded relational analysis of language motivation” (p. 221). Finally, she underscores that “… a person-in-context relational view of motivation… may usefully build on [these] different theoretical perspectives in an integrated… way” (p. 221). Hence, it is clear that she recognizes the worth in using Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) community of practice framework to better understand L2 motivation.

As mentioned earlier, other studies in the anthology also incorporate aspects of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) conceptual framework as it relates to L2 motivation. Yet, they show only partial pictures of the framework in relation to L2 motivation. For instance, Yashima (2009) explores the concept of ideal self to an imagined international community as a driving force for Japanese students’ motivation to learn English. She clearly links Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) to this research: “This concept is based on the notion of community of practice developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) and later adapted by Norton (2000, 2001) into her idea of imagined communities” (p. 148). Here, it is noteworthy that she focuses only on imagination and does not reflect other features of the conceptual framework such as engagement or alignment. Moreover, the dynamic interplay of these features is not explored in relation to L2 motivation.

In a similar vein, Lamb (2009) investigates Sumatran students and the way of “…deploying the constructs of ‘ideal’ and ‘ought-to’ L2 self in concert with more socially oriented constructs to explain L2 motivation (p. 232). He describes his research in relation to the community of practice framework: “I believe the study supports the views that ideal and ought-to-selves could be useful explanatory constructs in language learning motivation especially when combined with more sociologically-oriented theories such as those of Lave and Wenger (1991)” (p. 243). While describing one student, Lamb (2009) indicates that she self-regulates because she is more aligned with her imagined community of practice and wishes to identify herself as a member. This comment again reinforces Lamb’s links to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) framework. Regardless, Lamb (2009) like Yashima (2009) briefly highlights aspects of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) framework with regard to L2 motivation, but he does not explore the framework holistically in order to better L2 motivation.
This research does highlight the interrelationship among engagement, imagination, and alignment and their impact on identity while linking it to self-regulation in the Actional Phase and self-concept beliefs in the Post-actional Phase of Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) L2 Process model of motivation.

In fact, Wenger (1998) stresses the interrelationship among engagement, imagination and alignment means that “we have a vision and it helps us situate what we are doing and make it effective. We have a big picture and we do something about it in concert with others. We can therefore embrace that big picture as part of our identity because it reflects the scope of our imagination as well as the scope of effects of our actions” (p. 218). In the questionnaire, it is remarkable that the most weighted answers for both students and teachers are from statements which show students’ ability to make connections between their classroom experience and their experience beyond the class in the school and community through envisioning possible selves.

This research shows that there are four key moments where self-regulation to maintain L2 motivation occurs with English language learners in a multi-level classroom. Students respond to engagement or disengagement in the multi-level classroom by enacting their ability to imagine possible selves while nurturing their alignment to their families and friends as well as positively impacting their L2 motivation (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Self-regulation: Imagination and Alignment.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Lower Level Case Study Participant</th>
<th>Middle Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Higher Level Case Study Participants</th>
<th>Teacher Case Study Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models drive hope for successful integration</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lower level student

**Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family.”** Although Archie is at a lower level, he also helps another student who is lower than he. He recalls his own challenges and the support he receives. He notes that his ability to speak increases as he explains the work to the lower level. From this, he can recognize that he has progressed and he gains confidence in his English language learning because he sees his own improvement. Moreover, Archie’s desire to play the roles of helper, harmonizer, and starter with his peers in the multi-level classroom and the school community exemplify his desire to align himself with his fellow English language learners in their common goal of successfully integrating into Canadian society.

**Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models.** Since Archie is a lower level English language learner, when he interacts with more advanced level friends, Archie envisions who he could be in terms of his language proficiency: a more proficient speaker like the more advanced level students. Therefore, he wishes to align himself with these friends because they not only represent who he may become, but also they show him support in the classroom with his course work, and show him friendship both in the school and outside in the school community.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** When Archie is frustrated with the course work since he finds it repetitive, he takes charge of the situation by imagining a new role for himself: he decides to improve his Spanish by pairing himself with a Spanish native-speaker. Since Archie feels that his English is better than this student’s English, he alludes to the fact that he helps him with his English work while the native Spanish speaker supports Archie’s Spanish speaking. In addition to casual conversation, he also notes that he can practice his Spanish by using it as a scaffolding tool to help the lower level with his English. Hence, this is also an example of Archie feeling empathy for the lower level while at the same time he benefits because he increases his proficiency in English and Spanish. Through supporting his peer he sees that he also develops friendship and hence, a connection within the school and community with a social network; Archie is aligned with his fellow language learners in finding their sense of belonging in their new environment. Archie also values this opportunity to engage in Spanish because he links his proficiency in English and Spanish to future employment opportunities not only in Canada, but
also abroad. This linking once again shows him in alignment with his parent’s desire to integration into Canadian society and also his desire to be aligned with the Spanish language and cultural norms.

Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals. Overall, he regularly shows imagination by making connections between his desire for increased English language speaking activities in the classroom and his ability to navigate independently for making friends both in the school and the community; he especially seeks to connect with his peers since they understand each other and share in the common goal of finding their place in their new home. He describes that he also appreciates the communicative activities because he envisions how he will be able to navigate in the street or shop at a grocery store. In addition, he also links his image of himself as a proficient speaker with his ability to obtain employment. More specifically, his desire to be a harmonizer outside of the school community whereby he recognizes the possibilities of transferring his speaking skills in the multi-level classroom to his employment opportunities is in alignment with his family cause; he wishes to join forces with his parents to support the family finances. In other words, he is in harmony with their needs.

Middle level students

Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family.” Since Bina and Natalie are intermediate level English language learners, they imagine that they are seen as regular English language learners in the classroom by their peers and hence, they imagine that their peers do not judge them on their speaking. When examining Bina and Natalie’s relationship with their peers, they feel empathetic toward the lower level peers since they can recall their experiences as lower level learners and the support they received from other English language learners; both women are reminded of their progress and gain confidence through this understanding. Moreover, they feel happy to help the lower level classmates because they are all aligned in improving their communication skills. Therefore, they identify themselves as helpers in the classroom and school community.

Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models. Hence, it is easy for them to be role models for the lower level peers in such a supportive context. Bina and Natalie recognize not only the value of their support for the lower level learners, but they also highlight the importance of how they represent
images of the people who the lower level students can become and the more advanced students need to remind them of that so that they do not lose faith in themselves and their ability to communicate. In fact, the more advanced level learners also serve as role models for Bina. Natalie too mentions that she guides the lower level students and reminds them that she is an example of who they could be. Therefore, they feel a sense of freedom to express themselves and support the lower level classmates because they are aligned with the other English language learners in their common goal of learning English and in many other ways.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** Like Archie, when they feel bored in the classroom, they also imagine new roles for themselves: peer mentors. They do this because they envision how this activity will improve their communication skills with a wide variety of people and their understanding of their work which then will lead them to be more confident and social in school activities and in the community. Through connecting with their peers, they develop a social network that extends into other classes, co-curricular activities, and often, in the community events. These connections support their sense of belonging in their new country; they feel alignment with each other in their struggle find their place. In addition, they admit that through peer mentoring they also benefit in that they can learn the material better and they practice their speaking and group work skills which will aid them not only in future classes, but also in their futures as employees in multicultural work settings. This in turn reflects their desire to be aligned with their parents’ goals of their family having successful lives in mainstream Canadian society. Moreover, they acknowledgment their actual or future roles of helper, leader, and harmonizer within the English language learner peer group and their family is further evidence of their strong alignment.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** In general, Bina and Natalie focus on making links between their ability to engage in cooperative learning and their ability to participate in the school community and the community beyond the school. They recognize that their speaking practice will help them in a variety of situations including participating in regular classrooms or in clubs. For example, Bina and Natalie envision that as they build their self-confidence around speaking and group work and they learn about clubs through the curriculum, they can also see themselves being successfully involved in the school community with other English language learners since
the clubs provide a place for English language learners to have a sense of belonging in the school community because they draw people together who have common interests. Moreover, this need to feel included is a shared goal by many English language learners. Hence, they align themselves with other English language learners or their “family” whereby they share the common goal of integration into Canadian society. Furthermore, they briefly mention that they imagine how their increased ability to communicate with a diverse group in the classroom can help them as successful students in regular classes in the school community. Moreover, they acknowledge how their speaking through cooperative learning builds their proficiency and self-confidence which nourishes their connections outside of the school including orienting newcomers or translating. Natalie even makes links between working with a diverse group in the classroom with working in a diverse group of people in her career. All of these connections that they make between their communicative activities, where they learn material more and develop their skills, and their future selves show how they feel aligned with their peers’ or family’s goals of successfully integrating into Canadian society.

Higher level students

Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family.” Although they are both advanced English language learners, they still reflect on the importance of interacting with their peer group. Like Bina and Natalie, they imagine that they are seen as fellow English language learners by their peer group, and therefore, they do not worry about being criticized for errors in their speaking. Moreover, even though they are more proficient than many of their peers, they still appreciate feedback on their speaking or work. Also, Mark feels empathy for his peers and alignment with them because he recalls his own struggles and how he was supported and does not mind supporting the lower level students.

Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models. Moreover, Mark describes his ESL multi-level class as a very close-knit environment and notes that he wishes to serve as a role model for the lower level classmates because he can recall his own experiences. He remembers how afraid he was to approach others for help. This recollection stresses his own progress and builds his self-confidence. In fact, it is for that reason he wishes to be more challenged in the multi-level classroom; he is not yet sufficiently confident to be in mainstream classes. Mark explains that the higher level learners serve to challenge the lower level peers to improve their language
proficiency. He too likens the more advanced level classmates as role models for him and they serve to stimulate him to be competitive with them. Regardless, he still remains pleased with himself that he has supported the lower level students.

Rame also recognizes the connection that many higher level students feel toward lower level learners whereby they are happy to serve as role models because they have shared this experience of being a lower level student. Also, Rame acknowledges her role-model status with the lower level classmates and feels admired by them for her language proficiency. Like Mark, she is also competitive with her peers who are also advanced English language learners and who she sees as serving as role models for her too. On the other hand, she has not experienced this lower level struggle because she arrived in Canada with a high level of proficiency. Therefore, she cannot recall these types experience like other students who arrived with little English. Moreover, it is this reason that she does not desire to serve as a role model for the lower level peers. Overall, however, they both feel aligned with the other English language learners in their desire to improve their English language proficiency.

Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals. In addition, when Mark feels unhappy with his immediate situation due to the slow-paced simplistic work, he imagines that he may not be successful in regular classes because his immediate curricular needs are not being met. He feels great pressure to be prepared because he is now finishing his ESL courses and soon will be fully integrated into regular classes with native speakers. This negative image of himself goes against the common goals he shares with his family or his sense of alignment. Hence, he imagines a solution to help himself by helping the others progress more quickly. His solution is that he tutors, he suggests an alternate seating plan and he engages in homework from other classes. Through imagining this new role, he knows that he helps himself and his family in the future. Therefore, he also makes connections between his speaking and group work with the lower level classmates to other contexts; he creates a mentoring role in the classroom because he too wants to progress so that he will enter university and be a successful member of society: he is aligned with the goals of his family’s immigration. At the same time, through his tutoring he imagines how the lower level students feel because he recalls his own struggles at a lower level in his language proficiency. This act of imagination pushes him to support the lower level learners because he feels a sense of alignment with them in their struggle to learn English. Hence, he becomes a
leader in helping to support the less advanced English language learners both within the classroom and beyond in co-curricular activities and community events; through this act he develops friendships which he appreciates because he creates a social network for himself. This indicates his alignment with his peers in their goals of finding their place in their new environment.

In contrast, over the course of the semester when Rame’s frustration overcomes her because she has no challenging work, she disengages. Rame does not self-regulate or imagine a means to better her situation in the classroom, but instead she becomes withdrawn from the class and imagines herself in employment instead of her studies. Here, her alignment with her family dominates her focus. It is clear that her alignment is driving her ability to imagine links to her common goals with her family; however when her imagination with her present situation can no longer make these possible connections, she imagines another solution to supporting her family’s survival in Canada: she imagines herself working instead of studying. Moreover, since Rame is an advanced English language learner who has not experienced being a lower level language learner in Canada and she is a recent arrival, she is not empathetic to the lower level classmates and she is not as confident as Mark. Therefore, she is a leader when she is forced to be, but she prefers to be a follower with her English language learner peers. Although Rame rarely chooses to imagine herself in the role of peer mentor, she does recognize that if she did, it would help her to feel more confident because others look up to her. She then links this confidence to her ability to socialize outside of school. In the future, she imagines herself as a leader who is aligned with her peer group; however this will occur only when she has developed more confidence in herself with her peers. Hence, given her feelings, she does not even consider a tutoring role like Mark.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** Both Mark and Rame acknowledge that they value speaking activities in their multi-level classroom as a support for future experiences beyond the classroom, although they acknowledge that they wish to do more work. Moreover, they express their appreciation to practice their language skills with a diverse group in the multi-level classroom because they are able to see themselves as more empowered to participate in co-curricular activities. Hence, they will feel more aligned with their peer group in friendships where they share common interests in these activities. As well, as new immigrants, they feel connected by the common goal of wanting to find their place or social group in their new home. Also, when
they are engaged in communication skills in the multi-level classroom and their self-confidence is strong, they envision themselves as becoming more independent and social in mainstream society; they confidently interact with not only their English language peers, family or community, but they also begin to engage native speakers with less fear. As well, they both appreciate group activities because they recognize how that will help them in the future. For instance, Mark acknowledges that the multi-level GLS class group work will help him with regular courses so that he will achieve higher marks for post-secondary school or for understanding how to work in a multicultural setting. Through this reflection, they feel aligned with their peer group in that they share common interests as they socialize and they share the similar goal of finding their niche. Also, they are aligned with their family: they successfully integrate into Canadian society.

Teacher

Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family.” It is interesting that Mr. Orellana acknowledges his awareness of an alignment among English language learners, but what Mr. Orellana does not reveal through his comments is a full understanding of students’ alignment with their peer group. In contrast to the student participants who often name themselves as a “family”, he only touches on this connection that English language learners feel toward each other; he does not call it “family.” Instead, he describes it as “I think it’s more of a peer kind of relationship. But when the level levels are are further apart it becomes more of … a mentor kind of of relationship with them looking to the other person to be sort of more of a leader” (Interview 1). He describes them as “gelled well” (Interview 1). He only once mentions the empathy they feel with each others’ struggles: “…I guess we’re all kind of in the same situation but if you can help somebody out because you’ve been in that situation already as a newcomer to Canada ummm… and you can guide that person I think I think there’s more of a readiness…” (Interview 2). Hence, he shows a limited understanding of their “alignment.”

Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models. Mr. Orellana stresses the lower level learners see the higher level students as role models of who they would like to be: proficient speakers; however, he notes that students’ ability to make this link to images of other selves increases with students’ self-
confidence. He remarks that this leadership in the classroom transfers to co-curricular activities when he sees how boys on his soccer team interact with each other both on and off of the field.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** Mr. Orellana also recognizes that often the work can frustrate students from all levels. His hope is that students will encourage themselves when the learning conditions are not ideal. Therefore, he supports students in the peer mentoring role and comes to rely on this role as a key support for translation and assistance when he cannot always meet the needs of the lower level learners. Moreover, he sees the role a mutually beneficial where by the peer mentors also benefit through engagement in authentic conversations. Moreover, bonds of friendship are built through these connections; English language learners are drawn together and seek to find their place both in the school and beyond. These connections also encourage authentic conversations which benefits students’ language proficiency and hence, helps them to integrate into society. Likewise, often peer mentors work with lower level peers from a different cultural background. These conversations combined with guest speakers around multiculturalism helps students to bridge gaps in knowledge about other ethnicities thereby helping students to better understand their role as citizens of ethnically diverse country. Hence, he raises the peer mentors’ awareness that connections can be made between what they do in the classroom to what they can possibly do outside of the classroom; this reminder comes especially to his students who are also members on a team which he coaches. Hence, he encourages students to recognize their alignment with their family’s immigration goals, and their peer goals.

However, when Mr. Orellana creates a nurturing context which urges students to imagine possible roles for themselves or to self-regulate, and students still do not participate in this imagination or motivate themselves, Mr. Orellana feels the need to separate the language ability groupings to two classes: lower and middle level students and higher level learners. He feels that by doing this he would be better able to meet the needs of all levels; he has noticed that both the lower level and higher level students are especially challenged or not challenged in the multi-level classroom; hence, he hopes that a change in setting would better serve the needs of students, help them to see the path to a bright future for themselves and in this way, they would be aligned with the common goal of their families: successful integration into Canadian society.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** Mr. Orellana fully supports designing his curriculum to
nourish students’ abilities to make connections between their classroom work and other possibilities for themselves beyond the classroom. He attempts to help students see themselves beyond the classroom in future roles where they see themselves confident citizens engaged in a multi-cultural world. To summarize, these activities involve authentic oral communication, role play, and understanding of multicultural society. For example, Mr. Orellana underlines that often activities in the classroom that require less language could possibly help students see that getting involved in outside activities does not always require great language proficiency such as co-curricular teams or clubs. This point has also been made by Mark whereby he describes how by playing a sport helped to take the focus off of speaking skills because an athletic skill was at times more important than the language proficiency. As well, Mr. Orellana has students create projects around involvement in co-curricular activities. This project empowers students by having them role play the steps to get involved which often help give English language learners confidence. These links help students to make friends in the classroom and hence, they build their social networks which often support them to join co-curricular teams or clubs in the school. Not only does Mr. Orellana see the importance of building confidence around speaking activities, but he also values multi-cultural activities. For instance, he asks students to teach about their first language and culture which then empowers other students to connect with people from outside of their first language culture. Through this activity, students will develop an appreciation for living in a multi-cultural society. Overall, he focuses on disseminating information in written form, through first languages, and bringing community members to the classroom to raise awareness. In addition, Mr. Orellana’s answers also allude to his understanding of many students’ desire to support their parent’s goals: they wish to succeed in their new country. By succeeding in school and integrating into Canadian society, students are aligned with the common goal of their parents. Regardless, Mr. Orellana mentions that although he values helping students make connections between the multi-level classroom and the world outside of the classroom, he also recognizes that there may be times where the classroom cannot fully prepare students for their experiences outside of this secure environment.

A proposed model

When considering the data, imagination may direct alignment in self-regulation as Wenger (1998) has suggested: “…in terms of its broader effects, [imagination adapts] [alignment] under shifting circumstances, and fine tunes it intelligently, especially when things
like instructions are unclear or inapplicable” (p. 218). For example, less proficient students envision their more proficient peers as role models and imagine themselves as more proficient like them; then, often, they wish to work with their more proficient peers because they learn from them and feel supported through their friendship; thus, they align themselves in their struggle to learn English and to integrate into Canadian society. Similarly, when in a multi-level classroom, more proficient students recall their prior experiences as less proficient speakers and imagine how their less proficient peers struggle; from this, they feel empathy for their peers and safe to express themselves with less proficient peers. Hence, English language learners’ ability to imagine their peers’ challenges enhances their alignment with their peer group. Initially, lower level learners envision themselves in the future as proficient like their more advanced peers and so, these peers act as role models; however, as students’ proficiency increases students frequently look to their lower level peers with supportive eyes since they envision their prior selves and imagine that their peers struggle and need the same support they received; moreover, given this empathy, because many of the English language learners have gone through this process in the language learning, they imagine that their peers do not judge them as they speak; they feel free to express themselves.

Also, when students cannot imagine connections between present classroom work and future selves, they then envision new roles for themselves in the classroom such peer mentors or mentees which help them to develop their communication skills. They see these skills as valuable for their future selves in the school, and in the community in connecting with their peers. Through peer mentoring or being mentored, they make connections with other English language learners which lead them to form social networks. In these social networks, they feel alignment with their peers as they share common goals of wanting to improve their language proficiency and their sense of belonging in their new home. Hence, in this case, imagination drives their alignment with their peer group; it fine tunes the alignment as students imagine how their language proficiency can help them meet new friends who share common goals or interests.

On the other hand, through envisioning these new roles in the classroom, students also recognize that their communication skills will improve with these opportunities which will ultimately help them improve their studies and career opportunities in Canada; in this case, their initial goals of being aligned with their parents’ immigration, drive them to creatively look for ways to achieve these primary goals. Hence, for the most part, students attempt to envision
roles for themselves based on their engagement in the multi-level classroom whereby they align themselves with their peers in their common need for language proficiency or friendship. Yet, at the same time, by keeping their family goals in the back of their mind, they regularly envision the pathways to achieve these goals by linking their engagement to possible selves who are aligned with these familial goals.

Therefore, as Wenger suggests, imagination drives alignment, but this research also shows that alignment drives imagination. Students do envision possibilities for themselves when engaged in many activities in the multi-level classroom which guide them in understanding how they can be linked with their peer group in their common goals both in the school and the community; this shows how imagination guides alignment. In contrast, they also actively seek ways to envision how they can achieve the goals of their family/their immigration goals: they imagine how their engagement in the classroom can support their future selves in postsecondary school or in employment. Hence, this reiterates that this research is important in that it supports that students’ imagination can guide alignment, but it also reveals that students’ alignment with their family goals’ of successfully integrating into Canadian society also drives their imagination: their family goal of survival in a new land urges them to envision different roles for themselves which make them aligned with their family goals.

The following figures give a visual to a proposed model which links Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation framework with the Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation: Actional Phase and Post-actional Phase main motivational influences. Figure 5 presents the proposed model in its entirety. Figure 6 highlights imagination and alignment as part of “Knowledge and Use of Self-Regulatory Strategies.”
Figure 5: A model for connecting two conceptual frameworks.

Self-regulation should include Imagination and Alignment

Figure 6: Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies: imagination and alignment.


Moreover, this research proposes that Dörnyei’s (2005) discussion of the self-regulation, which includes imagination and alignment, could also be linked to issues of learner identity, according to Wenger (1998). In fact, Wenger (1998) concludes that learning which includes all three of these modes of belonging make learning not only about curriculum, but also about the formation of identities:

Students need:
1) places of engagement,
2) materials and experiences to build an image of the world and themselves, and
3) ways of having an effect on the world and making their actions matter. (p. 271)

More specifically, Wenger (1998) states, “our identities form in this kind of tension between our investment in various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in
those contexts. Identity formation is thus a dual process” (p. 188). Moreover, through participating in a classroom which nourishes engagement, imagination, and alignment, students’ identities are positively impacted through “identification” and “negotiability” (Wenger, 1998). Identification means the investment of self (p. 192). Negotiability means “the ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter in a social configuration” (p. 197). This is notable considering that in the beginning of the article on self-perceptions, Dörnyei (2005) calls for models that also link motivation to identity:

…I believe that a foreign language is more than a mere communication code that can be learnt similarly to other academic subjects; instead, it is also part of the individual’s personal ‘core,’ involved in most mental activities and forming an important part of one’s identity. Thus, I have become increasingly open to paradigms that would approach motivation from a whole-person perspective. (p. 94)

Figure 7 provides an amplified version of how identification and negotiability (Wenger, 1998) could fit in the motivational influence of “self-concept beliefs” in Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) Post-actional phase which could then impact students’ identity. Following this, there is a summary of the case study participants’ identification and negotiability as it relates to their engagement, imagination, and alignment. This discussion then sheds light on how they see themselves or what roles they give to themselves. It is remarkable that in the questionnaire, the significant data from the higher level and the teacher participants reflect students’ confidence to be supportive of their peers (identification), and students’ recognition of their potential to be key players in the school or community (negotiability).
**Lower Level Student**

In the multi-level classroom, Archie shows “identification” and “negotiability” with engagement, imagination, and alignment. In terms of engagement, he primarily feels happy to invest himself in the immediate learning context with his friends and teacher in the multi-level classroom because of his desire to gain communicative competence and companionship (identification). Through interacting in a variety of activities, he creates meaning in a non-threatening environment with his peers and teacher (negotiability) whereby he associates himself as part of the “ESL family” and he feels that his contributions are adopted by his peers. It is for that reason he is happy to take on the role of harmonizer, helper, or even starter.
In terms of imagination, he envisions how his activities in the classroom can aid him beyond the classroom in other contexts such as in co-curricular activities or employment (identification). He does this through listening, learning, sharing information with his peers and his teacher and gaining meaning from that information which enables him to picture himself in those future activities (negotiability) as a helper or starter. Moreover, when he is discontent with his learning environment, he visualizes himself in a new role in the classroom: Spanish student. He identifies with this role because of his prior experiences in Spanish language classes (identification). Moreover, he negotiates meaning through this role by interacting with a Spanish-speaking peer whereby he gains language and cultural knowledge about this student’s country.

As for alignment, he connects his learning to similar goals shared by others such as his fellow English language learners’ desire to achieve English language proficiency or his family’s desire for financial stability as newcomers in Canada (identification). Through being inspired by others or inspiring others to have a shared ownership of meaning, he shows his ability to join with other students and his family to forge ahead in their common goals of integration (negotiability). His desire to share in many common goals of his peers and family again shows his desire to be a helper or harmonizer.

Middle Level Students

In the multi-level classroom, Bina and Natalie also reveal that there is identification and negotiability in their engagement, imagination, and alignment. With engagement, they show that they invest themselves in their English language learning by their desire for communicative competence whereby they develop confidence in their speaking and group work skills in a multicultural context which is supportive of their learning: they do not feel judged by their peers for their English language proficiency (identification). Through interacting with their peers and teacher, they that they can negotiate meaning through speaking and group activities where they see themselves as leaders and helpers (negotiability).

Through Bina and Natalie’s ability to see themselves beyond these roles in the multi-level classroom to their many possible roles in the school community or outside the school community, they show “identification.” Moreover, as they share stories with other English language learners about their experiences as lower level students, and their desire to be more proficient in English, their empathy for the English language learner “family” is increased. They
gain meaning in their understanding of their possible roles through sharing this information (negotiability). They learn about being leaders, or helpers in the Ambassadors’ Club or cultural clubs or as leaders, helpers and harmonizers who translate or advise family and friends,

Moreover, like Archie, when they are not engaged by the curriculum, they imagine roles for themselves so they feel more involved: they envision they can mentor lower level students (identification); through picturing that their support will better aid not only themselves, but also their peers, they show their ability to understand what impact their mentoring could have in the multi-level classroom (negotiability).

In terms of alignment, Bina and Natalie connect their own struggles as newcomers to the shared struggles of their peers and family (identification). Through their desire to inspire their peers by peer mentoring or leading clubs and to share in the “delegation” of their family and friends’ needs whereby they take on a variety of responsibilities of translating or advising and employment, they achieve alignment through a shared ownership of meaning (negotiability). Again, they reveal their leadership, their helpful nature and their desire to work in harmony on their common goals.

*Higher Level Students*

In the case of “identification” or the investment of oneself in the multi-level classroom or engagement, Mark and Rame both show some investment of themselves because they appreciate a positive context for practicing their communication skills; however, they already feel quite self-confident with their English so they would rather be more challenged in another context (identification). Therefore, they are not fully engaging to their potential in the multi-level classroom because their less advanced peers’ language proficiency impacts the curriculum. In terms of both input and output, they feel that they are limited: the work is too simple and the pace is too slow (negotiability).

When considering imagination, they both identify other possible selves in relation to their classroom experience. On a positive note, Mark and Rame imagine that their speaking practice in a diverse environment will help them be somewhat prepared for engaging in future classrooms and involving themselves in co-curricular activities or employment (identification) and they will gain knowledge that will help them in these roles through interacting with other advanced learners or their teacher (negotiability). In contrast, since the multi-level classroom also is a source of frustration and boredom because of the simplistic work and the slow pace, at times,
they also cannot imagine themselves in other roles because of their limited experience in this context (identification). Moreover, since they are advanced level students, they cannot draw from the advice of the lower level peers, but rather it is they who can share their experience (negotiability). In fact, occasionally, they fear that they will be ill-prepared for regular classes or functioning in mainstream society and imagine their input and output to be limited in those contexts because of this experience (negotiability). However, through self-regulation or imagination, Mark again seeks to find identification and negotiability. Mark imagines a solution by becoming a peer tutor to his lower level peers (identification). Through this, he envisions that the pace will better suit him and he will feel more challenged and prepared for future classes that are demanding (negotiability). In addition, he supposes that his support will also benefit his peers and he feels pleased to do so because he imagines how they struggle as he did when he was a lower level (negotiability). Here he shows his desire to be a leader. In contrast, Rame does her work quickly and then wishes to be left alone; she does the minimal amount since she finds the work so unchallenging and slow. She does not imagine how to better her situation. There is little identification and negotiability on her part when she becomes displeased. She describes herself as a follower.

With alignment, both Mark and Rame share goals with their peers and family in adapting to their new lives (identification) and inspire each other through encouragement of cooperative learning to share in these common goals for surviving in Canada (negotiability). However, although Mark and Rame identify with their peers’ struggle, they are more advanced language learners and feel the need now to move more into mainstream classes and society. Therefore, at times, their investment of themselves with their lower level peers is more limited (identification). Since Rame is a recent arrival, she feels little desire to inspire the lower level classmates, but rather seeks to be inspired; hence, she identifies herself as a follower. It is Mark whose input is high in terms of creating meaning for the lower level students because to some extent he has experienced the lower level peers’ experience and for that reason, he wishes to support and inspire them to succeed in their multi-level class; therefore, he identifies himself as a leader. However, it must be noted that the output from the lower level students for Mark and Rame is low, regardless of the ever present common goal of adjusting to their new lives. Hence, the negotiability is one-sided. However, Mark and Rame’s alignment with their family is a constant. They continue to invest themselves in the common goal of building of a life in a new country.
In terms of engagement, Mr. Orellana describes that students feel investment of themselves because they appreciate engaging in communication and group work opportunities in a non-threatening environment with close-knit friends from diverse backgrounds (identification); yet at times, it is noticeable that the students disengage: it is especially noticeable with students at either end of the proficiency continuum: the lower level learners disconnect due to the work being too challenging or the higher level students disconnect because they find the work too easy (identification). As a result, Mr. Orellana describes learners’ ability to give and receive input as being both positively and negatively impacted (negotiability). He describes lower level students as being disengaged for almost 50% of the time; thus, there is little meaningful interaction for half of their time in the classroom (negotiability). As well, he mentions that the lower level learners require so much of his time that he infrequently interacts with the higher level students. Hence, their ability to engage in meaningful interaction is lowered because they are not stimulated by the work or by the teacher; as a result, they are often left with “down time” (negotiability). Overall, he indicates that students engaging mentorship create opportunities for meaningful interaction.

When considering imagination, Mr. Orellana states that students often make connections between their activities in the multi-level classroom to future possibilities for themselves (identification): their engagement in authentic conversation in a multicultural setting whereby they learn about co-curricular and community opportunities helps them to feel linked to future selves (negotiability). In addition, he notes that the lower level students often see their higher level peers as role models for them to envision who they can become: capable speakers who integrate. However, Mr. Orellana stresses that students’ self-confidence impacts their ability to imagine other selves; more advanced language learners tend to make more links than the lower level students. To nourish the lower level learners’ ability to imagine future possibilities for themselves, Mr. Orellana searches for ways to provide lower level students with information in
their first language. Through engaging in these types of activities, students can transport themselves and make meaning of those events as if they were there (negotiability). It is noteworthy that, unlike the students, Mr. Orellana does not mention that students envision new roles for themselves in the classroom (identification) in which they picture that they are engaged in more meaningful interaction (negotiation).

In terms of alignment, Mr. Orellana confirms that many students share common goals with their peers and their families to succeed in their new country (identification). Moreover, he notes that he is aligned with them because he too is an immigrant. Cooperative learning and first language use serves to enhance the production of meaningful input as they encourage and support each other in their integration into Canadian society (negotiability); regardless, Mr. Orellana does not deny that at moments, some higher level students do not want to support the lower level classmates and some lower level learners feel intimidated or frustrated by the higher level peers (identification). Moreover, in these circumstances little input is provided by either level (negotiability). Hence, their sense of alignment or camaraderie is lower. In terms of their alignment with their families, Mr. Orellana notes that students’ desire to invest themselves in the multi-level classroom is often based on their family goals (identification). Hence, parents influence their children’s interest in achieving common goals; generally, students are persuaded, inspired, and lead by their parents’ (negotiation) and this drives their alignment; however, Mr. Orellana also notices that in some cases, students are or are not interested in investing themselves in multi-level classroom and they do not wish to be lead or influenced by their parents’ interests (negotiability).

Therefore, given that identity formation and development are affected by students’ participation in the classroom through the degree to which they experience engagement, imagination, and alignment (Wenger, 1998), and provided that Dörnyei’s (2001) Actional phase includes “self-regulation” which Dörnyei (2005) proposes could be related to “imagination” and “alignment,” it is clear that this research supports Dörnyei (2005): both imagination and alignment should be included in “self-regulation.” Moreover, it should also be put forward that Wenger’s (1998) “identification” and “negotiability” be added to Dörnyei’s “self-concept beliefs” in the Post-actional phase: it is at this stage in the conceptual framework where issues of identity emerge (Dörnyei, 2001).
Chapter 9 – Final Thoughts

This chapter provides is divided into five sections. The first section serves as a brief summary of the key findings of the main research questions that were explored in Chapters 4 through 8. The second section briefly outlines the conceptual implications from Chapter 8. Then, the third section provides a detailed discussion of the pedagogical implications of this study. Following this, the fourth section delineates some limitations of the study. The fifth and final section describes areas for further research.

Summary of the key findings

This section summarizes the key findings that were common to all participants including both students and teachers. It is organized around the main research questions.

**ESL students’ overall experiences in the multi-level classroom**

The participants of this study indicate that their overall experience in the multi-level classroom is both positive and negative. Although they are generally quite content in the multi-level classroom, they nevertheless have moments when they would prefer a more homogeneous level environment. The positive factors include their appreciation for the use of first or shared languages in peer mentoring which scaffolds their learning and creates ideal conditions for some of them to engage in self-directed learning; however, they note that not everyone engages in self-directed learning. At the same time, although students enjoy being with others who share the same languages, they still express their enjoyment for mixing with students from diverse backgrounds because it enriches their understanding and sense of belonging in their new multi-cultural community. Finally, students express their gratitude for their special relationship with their ESL teacher which they liken to that of a friend who provides special one-to-one attention in the classroom which notably exceeds the time that regular teachers provide.

Surprisingly, even though students express gratitude for this individualized attention, they still note that often they do not receive enough attention from their ESL teacher; this mainly occurs because the lower level students dominate the teachers’ time and often, the more advanced level students are left to work on their own without receiving the time that they may need from the ESL teacher. Often, the lower level students are unhappy because the activities are similar for all students and not appropriate for them. Similarly, the most advanced level students frequently are unchallenged by the work. Therefore, both parties feel frustration and frequently, classroom management is challenging because of this discontent.
ESL students’ participation in the multi-level classroom

There are factors which enhance and inhibit students’ ability to participate in the multi-level classroom. Participants strongly indicate that they, themselves, are the primary driving force behind their participation because they actively make connections between their present situation and future possibilities and goals. This self-regulation is especially true when they feel disengaged in the classroom and they actively create new roles for themselves in order to create engagement opportunities which are linked to their ambitions: they become peer tutors in order to practice their English and to advance the course which they sees as stepping stones for their becoming more fluent and therefore, better equipped to integrate with peers and to be successful in their academic work and ultimately, their career. In addition, participants highlight the important role of the peer group as a positive factor for participation. Fellow classmates provide support, and role modeling which serve to enhance their cooperative learning and oral communication skills. Students also underscore that their teacher positively influences their participation.

On the other hand, some of these same factors can serve as barriers to participation. For example, students cite themselves as the strongest influence on their participation. Factors such as mood, commitment to employment, and cultural values are all motives for not participating in the multi-level classroom. Likewise, participants list course work as having a negative impact on students’ participation because it can be either too challenging or too difficult for them. Advanced students note their lower level peers can annoy them when the lower levels misbehave and interrupt their studies. Finally, some parents need students to work which limits their ability to participate in the classroom.

Despite the fact that the questions focused on the multi-level ESL classroom, participants chose to voice their opinions about other inhibiting factors outside of this environment. For example, in regular classrooms, co-curricular activities, or the community, the ESL students strongly express that the presence of native speakers negatively influenced their participation in these venues because they fear being judged on their language proficiency or feel negativity from native speaker peers. Likewise, the student participants say that by not providing individual attention or accommodation, often the regular teachers’ actions negatively influence their ability to participate because they seem uninterested in supporting the ESL students.
ESL students’ motivation in a multi-level classroom

It is noteworthy that many factors which positively and negatively impact students’ motivation are similar to those issues which impact their participation. Again, participants indicate that one parallel among the enhancing factors is they, themselves, who are the primary cause for their motivation. They motivate themselves by regularly making connections between their classroom work and their ambitions and also, by assuming new roles which increase their engagement to be aligned with these goals. As well, participants state that their peers and teacher, and the opportunity to engage in activities which focus on speaking also stimulate their desire to learn in the multi-level classroom just as they mentioned in their responses to the participation questions. Likewise, participants describe demotivating issues that echo inhibiting factors for their participation: self, course work, and peer group; again, in spite of this, they self-regulate to feel more motivated.

ESL students’ identity formation and development

Although students have moments of frustration in the multi-level classroom, they are mostly happy in this environment. The reason for this is that they feel a personal connection or a sense of investment in this setting because they are a part of the “ESL family.” They share the bond of being recent immigrants or having arrived with little language proficiency. Because of this bond, they feel free in this setting to make contributions and connections between their present context and their future ambitions while also focussing on their shared goals with peers and family. For this reason, many students play a variety of roles with their classmates: harmonizer, helper, and starter. The lower level peers look to the more advanced learners as leaders or role models who represent hope for their ability to adjust to their new culture. As language proficiency increases, more advanced level students often feel responsible for supporting lower level learners because they can empathize with their struggle to be more proficient or to better adjust to the new culture; however, it should be highlighted if students arrive with a high level of language proficiency, they are not as keen to support the lower level peers because they cannot empathize with their struggle to learn English. Generally, the more advanced learners see this support for their lower level classmates as an opportunity to improve their own communication skills and hasten the pace of the class. Yet, there comes a point when these higher level students feel confident enough with their language proficiency that they desire
to move to more challenging settings with more advanced students or native speakers, in order to pursue their goals. Hence, it is time to leave their “ESL family.”

**Conceptual Implications**

The conceptual implications were given great attention in Chapter 8. Therefore, this section serves only as a summary of this earlier discussion.

**Connecting the two conceptual frameworks**

It is remarkable how many of the responses to the participation and motivation questions parallel each other. This suggests that the two conceptual frameworks can be linked. More specifically, they can be linked by self-regulation. Throughout the data, it is noteworthy that the participants indicate the most common enhancing and inhibiting factor for participation and motivation is the students, themselves.

**Self-regulation – Imagination and Alignment**

In the Actional Phase of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation, self-regulation is indicated as one of the main motivational influences for students. Dörnyei (2005) lists this learner “motivational self-regulation” as an area for future research in educational psychology. In his discussion, it is important to note that he mentions the work of Norton (2001) and Wenger (1998) whereby he links self-regulation with “imagination” which Dörnyei calls “possible selves.” Moreover, Dörnyei (2005) calls for research to understand the interaction between imagination and alignment. In fact, again, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) have called for a rethinking of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation model to better understand the “process-oriented nature of motivation or the dynamic interaction between motivation and the social environment…” (pp. 354-355). By using the community of practice framework (Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), and in particular, highlighting the interaction of engagement, imagination, and alignment in the legitimate peripheral participation process, this research underscores the dynamic nature of the multi-level classroom and its impact on students’ self-regulation of their motivation and their identity formation and development.

More specifically, this study shows that there are four key moments when self-regulation draws on students’ imagination and alignment in the multi-level classroom:

- Self-regulation –Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family”
• Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models drive hope for successful integration
• Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals
• Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals

Moreover, it is interesting to note the dynamic interplay of imagination and alignment. On one hand, in the first two key moments, imagination drives students’ alignment with each other. On the other hand, when students feel disengaged in the classroom and are unable to make connections with their future ambitions or familial goals, they self-regulate or imagine new roles which are based in part on their desire to form a community with their peers, but as well, they aim to make links between this new role to their original immigration or familial goals; this alignment is always at the forefront of their mind. In fact, the fourth key moment shows how students actively look for ways to imagine connections between their classroom experience and their alignment with their immigration or familial goals which focus on having a successful life in a new country.

Identity

This research also answers another of Dörnyei’s (2005) calls for a paradigm which examines “…motivation from a whole-person perspective” (p. 94): it links motivation to identity. Wenger’s (1998) framework of identity is based on the concepts of “identification” and “negotiability” in students’ engagement, imagination, and alignment. Therefore, this study proposes that the Post-actional Phase of Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of L2 motivation can also be seen as a phase of identity formation and development. More specifically, it is proposed that the influence of “self-concept beliefs” be also defined by “identification” and “negotiability” from Wenger’s (1998) work.

Institutional Implications

Lower/Intermediate Level ESL Subject Courses

Mr. Orellana’s suggestion for more homogeneous level groupings summarizes some of the student participants’ feelings: lower/intermediate level students should be grouped together while intermediate/advanced level students are in another grouping; therefore, the mix of the
lowest level students with the most advanced level students at the other end of the continuum would be avoided.

Considering the participants’ responses, there should be ESL courses for lower and intermediate level English language learners which have less focus on reading and writing and which are not prerequisite courses for other core courses. With less focus on reading and writing, lower and intermediate English language learners would engage in more level appropriate work which allows them to gain confidence in their oral communication; also, this type of environment would foster knowledge of appropriate group work strategies in a multicultural setting which could provide special attention to the *Character Development Initiative*. Also, this setting would enable teachers to better adapt the curriculum to the required pace for these less advanced English language learners without feeling the pressure that there are gaps in their curriculum coverage or there are more advanced level students feeling frustrated by the slower pace. Furthermore, part of the course would be designed so that the benefits of cooperative learning would be embraced. Engagement in cooperative learning would be a key component and it would be promoted as being mutually beneficial to all levels. Moreover, the importance of being a role model and value of using first or additional languages as scaffolding tools would be underscored. The lower level students could therefore benefit from more individualized attention from either their teacher or a more advanced intermediate level peer during cooperative learning.

*Intermediate/Advanced ESL Subject Courses*

The intermediate or advanced English language learners would be provided with ESL subject courses which would be focused on the prerequisites for the mainstream courses; this could serve to build self-confidence for integration into regular classes as suggested by the advanced participants in this research. By limiting the multi-level nature of the class to the intermediate and advanced students, the course pace could be faster with more advanced work focusing on reading and writing than in the multi-level classroom; this would mitigate classroom management challenges or disengagement due to the lower level learners’ frustration or the higher level students’ boredom. Nevertheless, some attention to oral communication, group work, and cooperative learning would still be given in this context as in the lower/intermediate level course.
Policy Changes

The changes suggested in this type of programming are in line with the Ontario Ministry of Education’s policies listed on several occasions. For example, in the curriculum guidelines, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12 English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (2007), it says,

> English language learners who require ESL or ELD instruction should be placed in programs designed to meet their learning needs. Students, including beginning-level learners of English, should be placed in at least one mainstream class, to allow them to interact with their English-speaking peers (p. 25)

From this point, it is understood that the lower level students should be provided with some courses which offer sheltered instruction in ESL subject areas following the SIOP model; these courses are “to meet their learning needs.” Also, the offering of ESL subjects is again encouraged by the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines in their suggestions for program delivery. In particular, the “local school model” encourages schools to offer this variety of courses: “The school offers a range of other credit courses adapted to the needs of English language learners (e.g., geography, history, science)” (p. 28). In addition, the guidelines entitled, *English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Policies: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2007), section “2.5.1 Programming for English Language Learners” also repeats the same message for this type of programming:

> School boards will implement programs and services that will enable English language learners to continue their education while learning English. In all situations, English language learners must receive appropriate program support to enable them to participate successfully in Ontario schools. In order to provide the best possible programming for English language learners, school boards should offer program models that take into consideration the numbers and distribution of English language learners across the school board. Such program models may include: ...
>  
>  – sections of secondary courses designated for English language learners (e.g., Canadian geography for newcomers). (p. 22)

It is noteworthy that the document says, “In all situations…” Although the intentions are admirable, the Ontario Ministry of Education’s explanations about the creation of these ESL subject courses are vague. This case study gives directions as to how the ESL subject courses might be organized. It draws attention to the need to separate the highly multi-level classes into lower and intermediate groupings and intermediate and advanced groupings if we are to have
programming that meets the needs of “all.” In addition, this research draws attention to what the focus of these course groupings should be. Further explanation should be provided for these ESL subject courses; it should be as specific as the guidelines for the English subject areas (ESL AO-ESL EO) found in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12 English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (2007). Given the findings in this research, this would mean that teachers should be provided with a suggested outline for the lower/intermediate students’ and the intermediate/advanced students’ programming needs.

**Procedures**

**Ontario Ministry of Education.** To increase the chances for this type of diverse programming, changes should occur at the Ontario Ministry of Education, at the School Board, and at the school level.

Regier, Goossen, DiGiuseppe, and Campey (2006) write in a report for The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto that there is a current service gap starting at the Ontario Ministry of Education. They make suggestions that funding for English language learners be increased to match academic research with regard to the required time to learn academic English: Ontario provincial funding for secondary schools is available for only those students who have been in Canada for 4 years or less and who have come to Canada from non-English speaking countries. Yet, research shows that academic language learning can take from 5 to 7 years for students to reach the grade level norms of native speakers assuming that literacy issues are not present (Cummins, 1981). Regier, Goossen, DiGiuseppe, and Campey (2006) stress the funding deprivation:

Even with research on the lengthy time required for learning a second language, both federal and provincial governments’ ESL programs disregard this finding and instead impose restrictions and limitations on who is eligible for the programs along with the length of time allotted to complete the programs. In 1997, the provincial government created one of the most restrictive regulations and funding formulas for public education, severely impacting on ESL education in Toronto (16).

Similarly, in a School Board report, Cain and Green (2006) criticize the Province for underfunding the school board which then leads to ESL funds being allocated to other areas: “It is “disingenuous” to provide funding for ESL when the province knows it has to be used for utilities. The funding formula is a shell game” (p. 63). Cain and Green (2006) call for the government to implement the Rozanski (2002) recommendations: “… the Ministry of Education
increase the funds allocated under the Language Grant to reflect five years of language training for English as a Second Language/English Skills Development…” (p. 30).

Moreover, Rozanski (2002) also calls for the Ontario Ministry of Education to “… require school boards that receive funds through the Learning Opportunities Grant to report publicly on how the expenditure of these funds is contributing to continuous improvement in student achievement and to the reduction of the performance gap between high and low achievers in their schools while maintaining high standards” (p. 30). This recommendation is also critical of the School Board’s decision to not allocate the ESL funding to English language learners.

In 2007, the Ministry responded to these suggestions; however, the solution is weak in that it only provides recommendations rather than mandatory actions (People for Education, 2008, p. 20):

- students should continue to receive ESL support until they are able to function academically in English, but does not provide funding beyond 4 years…
- ESL funding should be spent on ESL programs, but does not mandate it.” (People for Education, 2008, p. 21)

The positive note of these recommendations is spending that is diverted from the ESL funding must be reported:

New requirements for reporting: A number of school boards report they spend a substantial portion of their ESL funding on things like school maintenance. With this year’s funding, the province added a transparency requirement – for the first time, boards will have to report publicly on exactly how they spend their ESL money. This may be a first step in ensuring that sufficient ESL funding is available for Ontario’s newcomer students. (People for Education, 2008, p. 21)

**School Board.** In fact, even the Equity Policy Advisory Committee (2006) of the School Board has criticized its own practices: “40% of ESL program money has been redirected to other areas of the School Board because these funds from the Ministry of Education are not sweated” (p. 1). It recommended that the Board reconsider its decision:

Whereas Toronto’s (Newcomer) students’ population requires ESL supports; and
Whereas the [School Board] has acknowledged that ESL funding from the Ministry of Education has been diverted to fund other shortfalls in the funding formula; and Whereas this diversion has meant that the learning needs of many of our most vulnerable students are not being met, be it resolved that: EPAC urge the Board to reconsider the motion from its regular meeting of 24 May 2006, which did not adopt the addition of 125 elementary teachers and 50 secondary teachers for the ESL program for 2006 – 07 (p. 1).
Likewise, in a School Board Report, Cain and Green (2006) acknowledge that the Board practices are detrimental to English language learners:

- The current Board expenditure in this area over and above the funding formula results in funding being taken from other categories (i.e. ESL and LOG funding).
- The loss of funding has a direct negative impact on student programs and services and therefore student success (p. 23)

Cain and Green (2006) continue to highlight the need for the School Board to better support English language learners in their discussion of “Program Issues:”

- [The School Board] needs specialized programs to attack the poverty and the needs of immigrant communities: pools, ESL, Parenting Centres, single parent families need for youth workers, counsellors, school community advisers, social workers are all hope for children without role models (p. 67).
- Half of ESL funding is diverted to other areas of budget shortfall (p. 70).

School. Moreover, this act of diverting ESL funding to other areas does not just occur at the School Board level, it also occurs again at the school level. Once more, the Equity Policy Advisory Committee (2006) of the School Board highlights this point: “All schools receive an ESL allocation but not all the resources are put in place” (p. 1). Similarly, the report done by Regier, Goossen, DiGiuseppe, and Campey (2006) for The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto underscores the diversion of funds for English language learners at the school level:

Based on our interviews, we have learned that in some secondary schools, there are no ESL/ELD programs or teachers although there are ESL students and some ESL teacher allocation… This is echoed in the 2003 Secondary School Tracking Report by the People for Education (2003a), which notes that 10% of the schools reported having ESL students but no ESL programs or teachers, compared to 4% in 2000/01. (p. 22)

Hence, the lack of funding for English language learners begins at the government level and can be decreased two more times at the school board and individual school levels. This calls for there to be accountability on all fronts and a system of checks and balances to ensure that the English language learners receive adequate funding.

This increase in funding would allow for more course sections at the school level which would then enable schools to embrace the programming suggested in this case study: lower/intermediate ESL classes and intermediate/advanced ESL classes. However, it is not only the funding at the school level that would make certain this programming would occur. It would also take the leadership of the school to embrace this initiative for lower/intermediate classes and intermediate/advanced classes. For example, when the school board sends the Secondary School
Staff Allocation document which indicates the number of ESL teachers based on the enrolment of English language learners who have been in Canada for 4 years or less, Administrators and Curriculum Leaders would need to make lower/intermediate level and intermediate/advanced level students’ courses a focal point when deciding on how to organize the sections allocated to ESL courses. Moreover, if these actions were combined with the aforementioned recommendation of having clear guidelines set for the ESL subject courses based on the different English language learner groupings, the programming in this case study would be facilitated: separate sections for lower/intermediate and intermediate/advanced ESL subject classes.

Teacher Education Implications

Regardless of some of the Ministry changes which show “there have been increases in funding for English as a Second Language programs over the last five years…” (People for Education, 2008, p. 20), the fact remains that there still is a disconnect “…between what is needed and what boards are able to provide” (People for Education, 2008, p. 20). Given this reality, it is unlikely that any programming recommendations based on this case study will influence policy. Hence, teachers at Parkdown will likely have to develop coping strategies for the multi-level subject classes with a full range of English language learners. Therefore, the teacher education required in schools like Parkdown needs to be “situated” and respond to the specific characteristics of learners and classrooms in these schools. This is the approach that Johnson (2009) calls for in teacher education:

The first challenge is to recognize that both content and activities of L2 teacher education must take into account the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers live, learn, and work. Creating locally appropriate responses to support the preparation and professionalism of L2 teachers will entail recognizing how changing socio-political and socioeconomic contexts impact upon the ways in which teachers are positioned, how they enact their teaching practices, and, most importantly, the kinds of learning environments they are willing and able to create for their L2 students. (p. 6)

Based on this case study, educators at Parkdown need to be aware that English language learners in multi-level classes face many challenges related to course content, materials as well as pace of instruction. These challenges can cause students at any level of English language proficiency to feel frustrated or bored and then become disruptive or disengaged. Given this reality, this research shows that teaching strategies that tap into motivational self-regulation or imagination and alignment can work to counteract the challenges faced by English language learners in the
multi-level classroom. Therefore, it is suggested that the classroom strategies which promote imagination and identify alignment be identified and explored in teacher education to support English language learners in such contexts.

Promoting Imagination

It is not enough for education to provide a locus of engagement. If the purpose of education is not simply to prepare students for a specific capability, but rather to give them a sense of the possible trajectories available in various communities, then education must involve imagination in a central way. (Wenger, 1998, p. 272)

Wenger (1998) calls for teachers to include activities which capture “students’ identities and expand them” (Wenger, 1998, p. 272). In particular, he stresses that students need to locate themselves in their environment and hence, activities should be created which help students’ awareness about their possible directions or “orientation.” As well, he calls for curriculum that encourages “reflection” and “exploration.”

Promoting Alignment

Through local engagement and panoramic imagination, students may gain a good understanding of their situation and still not be able to take charge of their destiny with respect to a broader context…How does one contribute to a broad enterprise?” (Wenger, 1998, p. 273)

Here, Wenger calls for activities which encourage students to cross “boundaries” where they can assume “multimembership,” appropriate “styles and discourses” from other community of practices, and provide input or “become involved” in these various communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 274).

Classroom Strategies for Promoting Imagination and Alignment in a multi-level ESL classroom

Self-regulation – Images of prior selves as struggling students drive empathy for other ELLs: “ESL family”. Specifically, this case study shows that the multi-level ESL subject classroom would benefit from activities which encourage more advanced students to recall their prior selves as less advanced English language learners when they received support from others. This will serve to nourish their compassion and motivate them to nurture their lower level peers. This would promote a culture of caring in the multi-level classroom and set a possible stage for these more advanced students’ willingness to engage in cooperative learning. Moreover, these activities should not only help students’ to envision their prior selves, but they also should raise students’ awareness regarding their shared membership with the other English language learners
in their common goal of becoming more proficient in English and integrated into the school culture and Canadian culture as a whole; it is clear that these goals cross the boundaries of the multi-level classroom. Hence, these activities would also enhance their feelings of being aligned on many fronts including their family goals.

**Self-regulation – Images of future selves as successful students based on more advanced ELL role models.** Likewise, activities which encourage lower level students to picture themselves as more advanced English language learners provide these students with “hope” for their future, as Natalie, a middle level, would describe it. In turn, this increases less advanced students’ receptiveness or motivation to engage in cooperative learning with the more advanced learners. Again, not only should the curriculum encourage students to see their possible selves, but also these activities should strengthen students’ abilities to see how these possible selves have interconnected aspirations with their peers on a variety of fronts both in and beyond the school context within not only their peer group but also within their families and communities.

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves in the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** This research reveals that often students will feel frustrated with the work in a multi-level classroom, because it is either too difficult for the less proficient students or too easy for the more advanced students. In response, they may look to cooperative learning as a means to help them feel like they are advancing in their work or feeling motivated by their context. By the teacher engaging in the aforementioned activities, the classroom culture will have already been established as being conducive to cooperative learning. However, to sustain their role in cooperative learning, students must be encouraged to engage in activities which help them to envision how their participation will benefit their future selves in achieving their shared peer or family goals. It is important to note that this research shows that in activities which ask students to envision their possible selves, students may form or define goals; however, this research also reveals that students may arrive with predetermined goals and the activities which call on them to imagine encourage them to picture different paths to reach those goals. Either way, students need to be permitted a certain degree of freedom in establishing how their role plays out in the classroom with regard to their alignment with others. For instance, Archie engaged in cooperative learning over a sustained period of time because he was given the freedom to work with a native Spanish speaker. While he helped the lower level with his
English homework using Spanish as a scaffolding tool, he also pictured how this experience was mutually beneficial to him in that he would become more proficient in Spanish. This imagined more proficient Archie could then establish friendships with other newcomers from Latin American or Spanish communities or gain employment to support his family in Canada by being multilingual; therefore, again, classroom work needs to draw students’ attention to how their present impacts their future; hence, boundaries are crossed, multimemberships exist, discourse from other communities of practice is acquired, and contributions are felt (Wenger, 1998, p. 274).

**Self-regulation – Images of new selves outside of the classroom are directly linked to peer or family immigration goals.** In general, then, when English language learners are engaged in a multi-level language ability context, an overall focus of the curriculum should be to have activities which encourage their ability to imagine connections to new selves outside of the classroom and link them to shared goals which are formed and shaped by this act of imagination or which are already predetermined. In other words, a main goal of the curriculum should be to provide nurturing activities which foster students’ abilities to connect their engagement to other identities beyond the classroom which are linked to their peer or family goals. This will instill in students a desire to take their learning beyond the classroom: “In order to combine engagement, imagination, and alignment, learning communities cannot be isolated. They must use the world around them as a learning resource and be a learning resource for the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 275).

Finally, educators must keep in mind that newcomers are able to find the trajectories into their new culture through these activities which call on engagement, imagination, and alignment; they offer “legitimate peripheral participation.” These activities create a context whereby newcomers feel “legitimacy” because the activities engage them in ways in which newcomers feel treated as valued members of a community of practice. Equally, these activities embrace “peripherality” in that the classroom provides English language learners with a safe place where they feel “free” to express themselves or to “practice” for the world beyond the classroom. By including all three modes of belonging, this means that the activities are focused on the formation and development of identity: through these activities, learners find “identification” or they invest themselves; similarly, they find “negotiability” in that they make meaning which is applicable to their new homeland.
Limitations of this Study

There are five limitations to this design. First, the study examines the opinions of students and teachers who are not necessarily experts in the field of grouping strategies. Yet, their opinions are vital because the focus of this qualitative study is to capture the feelings of these participants in order to better understand their overall experiences with regard to their course material, teacher and peers, their participation, and their motivation in a multi-level language ability context as well as their identity formation and development. Second, I am known in the school as a teacher; therefore, students or teachers may react to this social/power position by feeling pressured to participate or to avoid giving answers that seem critical of the program; however, at the same time, because I am known to the participants, they may also feel more relaxed and therefore, more willing to share their true feelings. Next, since this research is focusing on one case, it cannot be generalized to other contexts. Moreover, since there is no other case with which to compare this case, other factors besides the multi-level ability groupings may influence the responses of the participants. As well, some of the participants speak English at a beginner level. Hence, data may not be uncovered because of students’ inability to express themselves in English. Finally, the School Board would not allow me to collect data in September and January; therefore, my data collection did not last the entirety of the semester and was limited to only 3 months.

Areas for Further Research

Different Stakeholders’ Perspectives

Generally, the case study student participants who volunteered for this study are students who chose to self-regulate when the multi-level classroom was not engaging. While writing the cross-case analysis in Chapter 8, I could not help but question what my research would have revealed if I had more participants like Rame who chose not to self-regulate. What happens in the multi-level classroom when students do not imagine connections between their classroom and their future selves? What happens in the multi-level classroom when students do not feel aligned with their family’s immigration goals? Further research on students who do not self-regulate in the multi-level classroom would be valuable to better understand how participation, motivation, and identity in this setting are impacted.

Although participants were asked questions about the ESL multi-level classroom, many of them wanted to voice their opinions about their experiences in multi-level classrooms with
native speakers. It would be interesting to do investigations on participation, motivation and identity which follow a group English language learners in ESL multi-level classrooms and the same group of English language learners in regular classrooms. How are their participation, motivation, and identity impacted?

After recently attending a workshop with ESL teachers, I had to note their frustration with multi-level classes and their strong desire to have their voices heard. Therefore, since this study only has one case-study teacher participant, a deeper and wider investigation on different ESL teachers’ voices in the multi-level classroom would provide a better understanding of teachers’ experiences in this venue.

Given Mr. Orellana’s suggestions for more homogeneous groupings such as lower level students mixed with intermediate level learners or intermediate level students combined with advanced level learners, it would be worthwhile to do a cross-case analysis based on this study’s research questions with a highly heterogeneous classroom such as the one represented in this study versus more homogeneous classrooms.

Probing the Conceptual Frameworks

A study inquiring more detail about student imagination, and alignment would be beneficial in order to better link this research to classroom applications or parenting tips for recent immigrants. Participants could answer: What nurtures imagination? What nurtures alignment? What inhibits self-regulation: in the classroom, in the school, in the community?

At the onset of this study, the Actional Phase was the logical focus for the research because this phase corresponds to the multi-level classroom; however, as I gathered data around identity formation and development, it was evident that aspects of the Post-actional Phase were also significant in linking the two conceptual frameworks. Future research should probe Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) entire L2 Process Model of Motivation which means that the Pre-actional Phase would also be examined: the Pre-actional Phase would be the phase before students enter the classroom where students already have alignment with personal or familial goals or where students have alignment with peers.

Epilogue

In my desire to show a connection between two conceptual frameworks, this endeavour was centred on multiple research questions and sub-questions that often drew repetitive answers from participants and which made chapter organization a daunting task. Yet, despite this
struggle, I am proud to have chosen a research topic which gives voice to the experiences of our newcomer youth. In fact, it fits perfectly with my direction of two *Growing New Roots* DVDs which also paint an intimate picture of English languages learners on their immigrant journey. I will continue to create more opportunities for these immigrant adolescents to depict their newcomer stories.

Although I have learned from the participants that more homogeneous groupings in classes would be preferable, I feel relieved that my fears about the detrimental nature of the multi-level class have been somewhat alleviated. Student participants have impressed me with their determination when faced with a disengaging multi-level classroom. They have revealed their strong desire to succeed in Canada. Through having a creative mind which looks for the path to success, they nurture their strong alignment with their ESL family while at the same time remaining true to their alignment with their birth family. Presently, Archie, Bina, Natalie, and Mark continue to forge ahead. In fact, last year Rame began to choose a different road for herself. Now, she too self-regulates despite disengaging classrooms and a difficult home front. She will graduate this year! This is the happy ending for my wonderful thesis story.

Finally, I feel fortunate to work in an environment with educators who continually support my endeavours to better the learning conditions of our immigrant teenagers. To quote a fellow educator, we must go from “good to great to awesome!” Indeed, to offer “awesome” ESL programming, we need to rearrange our ESL subject classrooms to be more homogeneous and to teach our students about self-regulation strategies.
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Appendix A

Consent letter to the school’s principal from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead)

Date
(name of principal and address of the school)
Dear (name of principal):

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Based on what we have already discussed, I am writing to you to formally request permission to conduct research in your school, which is a suitable site for my study due to the existence of a multi-level language ability classes for English as a second language students.

As part of my thesis research, I want to find out more about ESL students’ experience learning in a multi-level classroom. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, and the school board, I am now requesting your permission to conduct this study in a multi-level ESL language ability classroom. It would involve recruiting a third party to assist in the distribution of the research information and the collection of consent forms.

The third party would have a meeting to recruit an ESL subject teacher and from that teacher’s class, the third party would recruit a group of 7 students by meeting with that teacher’s class. The same third party would also collect the consent forms from all interested participants on a first-come, first-serve basis in order to protect students’ and teachers’ privacy. This will assist in
maintaining students’ and teachers’ confidentiality about who showed interest in participating in the study.

The research would include **three methods of data collection over the first semester:** classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and voluntary written journals.

- **Semi-monthly observations** of the students and teacher will occur in the selected multi-level ESL classroom. These observations will allow me to better understand the classroom dynamics as they relate to the students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation.
- Moreover, these observations will inform the **in-school one-hour monthly interviews** done with each participant **after school** in which I will ask the 7 students and the teacher to describe their feelings about the multi-level classroom.
- Similarly, **on a monthly basis,** I will ask the 7 students and the teacher to submit to me **written journals** that describe their thoughts about their experiences in the multi-level classroom.
- Also, **on a one-time basis,** the same third party person will call **meetings** to explain about participating in **an on-line questionnaire** and to **collect consent forms** from those interested parties (consent forms would be collected from parents and students/teachers indicate their consent by clicking “Submit”). Students who are on the ESL School List and ESL subject teachers will be invited to complete an on-line questionnaire. Once again, permission to proceed with the above-mentioned observations, interviews, written journals, and questionnaires will be sought from the teacher, the students’ parents, and students and will be kept in confidence by the third party person.

If you accept that I conduct this study in your school, you may rest assured that **privacy will be protected at all times.** The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request. Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to let me conduct this study at your school as it may prove beneficial to ESL teachers and ESL students in the future. Also, this one-to-one interaction will **benefit your school in that it will act as a catalyst for the reflective growth process and the**
participants will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of their involvement with the research.

If you accept, I will proceed in recruiting the teacher and the students. I will make all the necessary arrangements that will include seeking the teacher’s, the students’ parents’ and the students’ permission. It is understood that the participants may ask me to stop my study at any time, without giving a reason.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it to me. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person, by telephone, or through e-mail. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the school’s principal)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign, and return to the researcher.

Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, ______________________________, give permission for the study described in the attached letter to be carried on in ________________________________ (name of school).

☐ I, ______________________________, do not wish to give permission for the study described in the attached letter to be carried out in ________________________________ (name of school).

Signature of school’s principal: ____________________________________________________

Name (please print): __________________________

Date: _______________________________
Appendix B

Consent letter to the third party teacher from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead)

Date
(name of teacher and address of school)

Dear (name of teacher):

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. As we have discussed, I am writing to you to formally request permission to assist me in conducting my research in your school. The school is a suitable site for my study since it contains students who are multi-level in their English language ability.

As part of my thesis research, I want to find out more about ESL students’ experience learning in a multi-level classroom. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, and your principal, I am now requesting your permission to assist me with the distribution of the information for this study, and the collection of the participants’ consent forms in order to maintain all participants’ privacy.

For the case study and the questionnaire, there would be a total of four meetings in the school lasting about 30 minutes in which you would invite teacher and student participants to participate. The first two meetings for the case study, would occur prior to or at the
beginning of the semester. The on-line questionnaire meetings would occur in the last month of the semester.

At the meetings, you would explain and answer questions about the study, criteria for participants, the selection process, and after the meetings, you would collect the consent forms and keep them in confidence. The researcher will provide you with all of the required information and materials to be distributed at the meetings.

Overall, the research would involve having you recruit an ESL subject teacher with students who have multi-level language ability groupings and then, from that teacher’s class, you would invite 7 students to participate in my research. After your recruitment of the case study participants, I would then begin the research.

The research would include three methods of data collection over the first semester: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and voluntary written journals.

- **Semi-monthly observations** of the students and teacher will occur in the selected multi-level ESL classroom. These observations will allow me to better understand the classroom dynamics as they relate to the students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation.
- Moreover, these observations will inform the in-school one-hour monthly interviews done with each participant after school in which I will ask the 7 students and the teacher to describe their feelings about the multi-level classroom.
- Similarly, on a monthly basis, I will ask the 7 students and the teacher to submit to me written journals that describe their thoughts about their experiences in the multi-level classroom.
- Also, on a one-time basis, you would call two meetings, one for teachers and one for students, to explain about participating in an on-line questionnaire and to collect consent forms from those interested parties (consent forms would be collected from parents and students/teachers indicate their consent by clicking “Submit”). Students who are on the ESL School List and ESL subject teachers will be invited to complete an on-line questionnaire. Once again, permission to proceed with the above-mentioned observations, interviews, written journals, and questionnaires will be sought from the teacher, the students’ parents, and students and will be kept in confidence by you.

If you accept to help me with this study, you may rest assured that privacy will be protected at all times. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made
available upon request. Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teachers and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and each teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and each teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to help me conduct this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL teachers and ESL students in the future. Also, this interaction in the recruitment will benefit you in that it will act as a catalyst for your professional growth in leading meetings and understanding educational research. As well, you will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of your involvement with the research.

If you accept, I will make all the necessary arrangements and I will instruct you on how to proceed in recruiting the teachers and students. You may, of course, refuse permission, or withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it to me. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person, by telephone, or through e-mail. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the third party teacher)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign, and return to the researcher.

Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, ____________________________, agree to participate in the study described in the attached letter. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I agree to participate in this study which involves recruiting students and teachers for the case study and on-line questionnaire and collecting the consent forms from all of the participants.

☐ I, ____________________________, do not wish to participate in the study described in the attached letter. I do not wish to participate in this study which involves recruiting students and teachers for the case study and on-line questionnaire and collecting the consent forms from all of the participants.

Signature of teacher: ______________________________________________________

Name (please print): _______________________________________________________

Date: _______________________________
Appendix C

Instructions: Third Party Teacher

Teachers (Case Study)

➢ Place the invitation to participate in the case study in the mailboxes of the ESL subject class teachers when the researcher indicates that it is an appropriate time.

At the meeting…

➢ Stress the information on the “Highlights of Study” sheet with regard to the “Criteria for the Participants” and “Recruitment”
➢ Distribute letters of permission, consent forms, and answer questions.
➢ Review the letter and the consent form.
➢ Stress that the participation in the research is voluntary and that non-participation will not carry any negative consequences.
➢ Inform them that at the end of the semester, there will be another meeting to explain, in more detail, the on-line questionnaire that is mentioned in the letter.
➢ Thank them for their interest.
➢ If they are interested, ask them to place the consent forms in sealed envelopes in your mailbox as soon as possible.

Later…

➢ Inform the first teacher participant that he or she is a part of the case study.
➢ Distribute letter of appreciation in a sealed envelope to those teachers who volunteered but who were not first. Deliver to teachers’ mailboxes in the main office.
➢ Retain the consent forms in confidence except for the form of the teacher volunteer; this consent form will be given to the researcher.

Students (Case Study)

➢ Establish a time with the teacher participant to visit the class to discuss the research with the students.

In the volunteer teacher’s class…

➢ Stress the information on the “Highlights of Study” sheet with regard to the “Criteria for the Participants” and “Recruitment”
Distribute student and parent letters of permission, consent forms, and answer questions.
Review the letters and the consent forms.
Emphasize that translators will be made available if necessary (A list will be provided to you.)
Highlight that it will be totally fine if student participants wish to drop-out of the study at any time because the researcher requested more than the minimum number of required participants in anticipation that some students may not be able to participate for some reason.
Stress that the participation in the research is voluntary and that non-participation will not carry any negative consequences.
Inform them that at the end of the semester, there will be another meeting to explain, in more detail, the on-line questionnaire that is mentioned in the letter.
Thank them for their interest.
If they are interested, ask them to place the consent forms in sealed envelopes in your mailbox as soon as possible.

Later…

Inform the first seven student participants that they are a part of the case study.
Distribute letter of appreciation in a sealed envelope to those students who volunteered but who were not first. Deliver to home-form mailboxes in the main office.
Retain the consent forms in confidence except for the forms of the seven student volunteers; those consent forms will be given to the researcher.

Teachers (On-line Questionnaire)

Place the invitation to participate in the case study in the mailboxes of the ESL subject class teachers when the researcher indicates that it is an appropriate time (the end of the semester).

At the meeting…

Distribute letters of permission, consent forms, and answer questions.
Review the letter and the consent form
Stress that the participation in the research is voluntary and that non-participation will not carry any negative consequences.
Highlight that the on-line questionnaire will not require that they identify themselves.
➢ If teachers are interested, ask them to complete the on-line questionnaire which is available at the web site address indicated in the information letter. By clicking “Submit,” they indicate their willingness to participate in the on-line questionnaire.
➢ Thank them for their interest.

Students (On-line Questionnaire)

➢ Through the morning announcements, students on the ESL School List will be invited to a meeting; the announcement will be written up by the researcher at the end of the semester.

At the meeting…

➢ Distribute letters of permission, consent forms, and answer questions.
➢ Review the letter and the consent form
➢ Emphasize that translators will be made available if necessary (A list will be provided to you.).
➢ Stress that the participation in the research is voluntary and that non-participation will not carry any negative consequences.
➢ Highlight that the on-line questionnaire will not require that they identify themselves.
➢ If they are interested, ask them to place the consent forms from their parents and them in sealed envelopes in your mailbox as soon as possible.
➢ After receiving the consent forms, give students the web site address for the questionnaire (the address will be provided to you).
➢ Thank them for their interest.
Appendix D

Case Study Teacher Advertisement

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Consider Participating in a Case Study to Support ESL Students

(Teacher Copy)

To: names of potential teachers

Meeting Date:

Location:

From: Ms. XXXXXX

➢ Questions will be answered and letters of permission/ consent forms will be distributed at the meeting.

Highlights of Study

General Information

➢ What? You are invited to participate in Stephanie Soto Gordon’s case study which examines English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom.

➢ Why? Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

➢ How? When? Where? The research would consist of four methods of data collection over first semester (September 2007-January 2008) at XXXXX.: semi-monthly classroom observations, an in-school one-hour monthly interview after school hours, monthly voluntary written journal, and a one-time on-line questionnaire at the end of the semester.

Criteria for the Participants

➢ 1 teacher of an ESL subject class that has students with a variety of language abilities such as ESLA, ESLB, ESLC, ESLD, ESLE. These are teachers of any of the classes with an “8” at the end of their course code: ADA208
➢ 7 ESLA - ESLE students from the volunteer teacher participant’s class who are not students in Ms. Soto Gordon’s classes during the semester in which the research is occurring.

Recruitment

➢ For privacy reasons, Ms. XXXXXX will distribute the information about the study and collect the consent forms on a first-come, first serve basis. Therefore, Stephanie Soto Gordon will not know who chose to volunteer and who did not volunteer.

Compensation

➢ Professional growth through reflective practice
➢ You will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of your involvement with the research.
➢ Practice of English language skills.
Appendix E

Consent letter to the case study teacher from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead)

Date
(name of teacher and address of school)

Dear (name of teacher):

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. As we have discussed, I am writing to you to formally request permission to conduct research in your class. It is a suitable site for my study since it contains students who are multi-level in their English language ability.

As part of my thesis research, I want to find out more about ESL students’ experience learning in a multi-level classroom. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, *A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?* may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, and your principal, I am now requesting your permission to conduct this study in your multi-level ESL language ability classroom. As it has been explained at the meeting with Ms. XXXXXX, it would involve you and recruiting a group of 7 students from your class by having Ms. XXXXXX meet with the class to explain the research. Ms. XXXXXX would also collect the consent forms from all interested participants on a first-come, first-serve basis in order to protect students’ and teachers’ privacy. This would assist in maintaining students’ and teachers’ confidentiality about who showed interest in participating in the study.
The research would consist of **four methods of data collection over the first semester:** classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, voluntary written journals and an online questionnaire.

- **Semi-monthly observations** of the students and you will occur **in your multi-level ESL classroom.** These observations will allow me to better understand the classroom dynamics as they relate to the students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation.

- Moreover, these observations will inform the **in-school one-hour monthly interviews** done with each participant at a convenient time after school. In the interviews, I will ask the 7 students and you to describe your feelings about the multi-level classroom.

- Similarly, **on a monthly basis,** I will ask the 7 students and you to submit to me **written journals** that describe your thoughts about your experiences in the multi-level classroom.

- Also, **on a one-time basis,** Ms. XXXXXX will call meetings to explain about participating in **an on-line questionnaire** and to collect consent forms from those interested parties. Students who are on the ESL School List and ESL subject teachers will be invited to complete an on-line questionnaire. Once again, permission to proceed with the above-mentioned observations, interviews, written journals, and questionnaires will be sought from the teacher, the students’ parents, and students and will be kept in confidence by Ms. XXXXXX.

If you accept that I conduct this study in your class, you may rest assured that **your privacy will be protected at all times.** The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request. Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to let me conduct this study in your class as it may prove beneficial to ESL teachers and ESL students in the future. Also, this one-to-one interaction will **benefit you in that it will act as a catalyst for the reflective growth process and you will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of your involvement with the research.**
If you accept, I will proceed in recruiting the students. I will make all the necessary arrangements that will include seeking students’ parents and students’ permission. It is understood that you may ask me to stop my study at any time, without giving a reason.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it to Ms. XXXXXX. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person, by telephone, or through e-mail. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the teacher)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign, and return to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided.

Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, _____________________________, agree to let my ESL class participate in the study described in the attached letter. I understand that I may withdraw my classes from the study at any time without giving a reason. I agree to participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals and an on-line questionnaire. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I, _____________________________, do not wish to let my ESL class participate in the study described in the attached letter. I do not wish to participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals and an on-line questionnaire.

Signature of teacher: _____________________________________________________________

Name (please print): _____________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix F

Letter of Appreciation

Dear ________________:

Thank you for offering to participate in Stephanie Soto Gordon’s case study research; however, since the recruitment was on a first-come, first serve basis, your consent form came after the participants had been accepted; therefore, you are not able to participate in this part of the research.

You can, however, still participate in the on-line questionnaire. More information on the on-line questionnaire will follow at a meeting that will be called near the end of the semester.

Since I, Ms. XXXXXX, am collecting the consent forms and keeping them confidential, Stephanie Soto Gordon has no way of knowing whether you volunteered or did not volunteer for the study.

Thank you again,

Ms. XXXXXX for Stephanie Soto Gordon
Appendix G

Case Study Student Advertisement

Tell Us What You Think!
Consider Participating in a Case Study to Support ESL Students
(Student Copy)

Highlights of Study

General Information

➢ What? You are invited to participate in Stephanie Soto Gordon’s case study which examines English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom.

➢ Why? Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

➢ How? When? Where? The research would consist of four methods of data collection over first semester (September 2007-January 2008) at XXXXX: semi-monthly classroom observations, an in-school one-hour monthly interview after school hours, monthly voluntary written journal, and a one-time on-line questionnaire at the end of the semester.

Criteria for the Participants

➢ 1 teacher of an ESL subject class that has students with a variety of language abilities such as ESLA, ESLB, ESLC, ESLD, ESLE. These are teachers of any of the classes with an “8” at the end of their course code: ADA208

➢ 7 ESLA - ESLE students from the volunteer teacher participant’s class who are not students in Ms. Soto Gordon’s classes during the semester in which the research is occurring.

Recruitment

➢ For privacy reasons, Ms. XXXXXXX will distribute the information about the study and collect the consent forms on a first-come, first serve basis. Therefore, Stephanie Soto Gordon will not know who chose to volunteer and who did not volunteer.

Compensation

➢ You will reflect on your studies
➢ You will practice your English
➢ You will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of your involvement with the research.
Appendix H

Letter to the case study ESL students from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead/to be translated as necessary)

Date
Dear…
I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to you to formally request that you participate in this study.

As part of my research, I would like to find out more about English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom. This classroom has many different groups of students: beginner ESLA/B/ students are mixed with advanced ESL E students. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, the principal, and your classroom teacher, I am now requesting that you, as a member of the multi-level ESL language ability classroom, participate in this study. As it has been explained to you by Ms. XXXXXX, it would involve a group of 7 students, and your classroom teacher. Participants will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis by Ms. XXXXXX so that no one except her will know who wanted to participate or who did not want to participate. This will assist in maintaining students’ and teachers’ confidentiality about who showed interest in participating in the study.
The research would consist of four methods of data collection over the first semester (September 2007-January 2008):

- semi-monthly classroom observations,
- one-hour monthly interviews (done one time per month in the school after school hours),
- monthly voluntary written journals,
- and a one-time on-line questionnaire.

Once again, permission to proceed with the above-mentioned observations, interviews, written journals, and questionnaires will be sought from the teacher, the students’ parents, and students and will be kept in confidence by Ms. XXXXXX.

If you agree to participate, you may rest assured that your privacy will be protected at all times. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request. Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to participate in this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL students and ESL teachers in the future. Also, this one-to-one interaction will benefit you in that it will help you to reflect on your studies, practice your English, and you will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of your involvement with the research. You may, of course, refuse permission, or withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason and without your withdrawal affecting your school program or marks.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it with your parents’ consent form to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided. You may keep the letter for future reference.
greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person at school, or by telephone. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the student)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign and return to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided with your guardians’/parents’ consent form.

FOR THE STUDENT: Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, _____________________________, agree to participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals and an on-line questionnaire. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without my withdrawal affecting my marks nor the instruction I will receive.

☐ I, _____________________________, do not wish to participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals and an on-line questionnaire. I understand that my non-participation will not affect my marks nor the instruction I will receive.

Signature of student: _____________________________

ESL Level _____

Home Form _____

Name (please print): _____________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix I

Letter to the ESL case study parents from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead/to be translated as necessary)

Date
(name and address of the school)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to you to formally request permission for your son or daughter to participate in this study.

As part of my research, I would like to find out more about English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom. This classroom has a wide range of students: beginner ESL students are mixed with advanced ESL students. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, the principal, and the classroom teacher, I am now requesting your permission to allow your child, who is in a multi-level ESL language ability classroom, to participate in this study. As it has been explained to your child by Ms. XXXXXX, it would involve a group of 7 students, and their classroom teacher. Participants will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis by Ms. XXXXXX so that no one except her will know who wanted to participate or who did not want to participate. This will assist in maintaining students’ and teachers’ confidentiality about who showed interest in participating in the study.
The research would consist of four methods of data collection over the first semester (September 2007-January 2008):

- semi-monthly observations of your child’s class,
- one-hour monthly interviews (done one time per month after school),
- monthly voluntary written journals,
- and a one-time on-line questionnaire.

Once again, permission to proceed with the above-mentioned observations, interviews, written journals, and questionnaires will be sought from the teacher, the students’ parents, and students and will be kept in confidence by Ms. XXXXXX.

If you allow your son or daughter to participate, you may rest assured that his or her privacy will be protected at all times. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request. Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to allow your child to participate in this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL students and ESL teachers in the future. Also, this one-to-one interaction will benefit your child in that it will help him or her to reflect on his or her studies, practice his or her English, and he or she will receive a bookstore gift certificate upon completion of his or her involvement with the research. You may, of course, refuse permission, or your child may refuse, or may withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason and without his or her withdrawal affecting his or her school program or marks.

You may keep the letter for future reference. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person at school, by telephone. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University
of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the parent/guardian)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign, and return to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided with your son/daughter’s consent form.

FOR THE PARENT/GUARDIAN: Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, ___________________________(your name) agree to allow my son/daughter ___________________________(the name of your son or daughter) to participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals, and an on-line questionnaire. I understand that my son/daughter may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without his or her withdrawal affecting his/her marks or the instruction he/she will receive.

☐ I, ___________________________(your name) do not wish that my son/daughter ___________________________(the name of your son or daughter) participate in this study which involves some observation, interviewing, written journals, and an on-line questionnaire. I understand that his/her non-participation will not affect his/her marks or the instruction he/she will receive.

Signature of parent/guardian: ___________________________Name (please print): ___________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix J

First Interview: ESL students

Background

1. Could you please tell me about yourself?
   ➢ Country of origin
   ➢ Language and culture
   ➢ Previous education
   ➢ ESL education
   ➢ Immigration to Canada
   ➢ ESL level
   ➢ Timetable
   ➢ Living Situation
   ➢ Co-curricular Involvement
   ➢ Hobbies
   ➢ Employment

Nature of overall experience

1. If I were in your ESL subject classroom, what would I see you doing…
   ➢ with the course material?
   ➢ with your teacher?
   ➢ with your peers?
   ➢ alone?

2. How would you describe your feelings about being in a class with multi-level groupings?

3. Does the student’s level affect how she or he feels in the multi-level classroom? For example, does a level A student feel differently than a level E student?

4. Is the amount of time your teacher spends with you affected in a multi-level class?

5. In a multi-level class, are their more problems among students because of the needs of the different levels of English?

6. How would you describe the activities for students in a multi-level classroom? Can all students do the same activities?
7. Would say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students to work together than a class with students at the same level? Is that a reason to have a multi-level class?

8. Would you say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students mix with other students from different cultures?

9. In your multi-level class, do you feel that teachers can be more flexible with the curriculum expectations? Do you feel that it is acceptable to not cover the course work in a multi-level classroom? Does that worry you?

10. When you think of the multi-level classroom, do you feel happy with the teacher teaching less where when you have a problem, first, you would ask your friends for help and then the teacher? Would you be OK with taking on more responsibility for your learning?

11. Do you think that it is important for the ESL English teacher (ESL Curriculum Leader) to work with your ESL teacher of this class? Why?

Participation

1. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in the ESL subject classroom? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

2. When you think of your ESL subject class, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

3. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in co-curricular activities? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

4. When you think of the school, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate in co-curricular activities? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

5. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in the community outside of school? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

6. When you think of Canadian society, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate in the community outside of school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?
7. What would help increase your participation in this ESL subject classroom? Is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities?

8. If you think of your ESL subject classroom, is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities, which would help increase your participation in the co-curricular activities in the school?

9. If you think of your ESL subject classroom, is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities, which would help increase your participation in the community outside of school?

10. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people that prevent you from participating in that class? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

11. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people in that class that prevent you from participating in the co-curricular activities in the school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

12. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people in that class that prevent you from participating in the community outside of school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

Identity


4. If I were to walk into the ESL classroom, what roles would I see you playing? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?

5. If I were to walk into the school, what roles would I see you playing in co-curricular activities? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?

6. If I were to watch you in the community outside of school, what roles do you play in Canadian society? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?

**Motivation**

1. When you think of the ESL classroom, how motivated do you feel in this class? Rate your answer on a scale of one to ten. One means **you do not want to be studying there**. Ten means that **you want to be studying in that classroom every day**.

2. When you think of the ESL classroom, what is it about the class that makes you feel the most motivated to learn? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

3. When you think of the ESL classroom, what is it about the class that makes you feel the least motivated to learn? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

4. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the class, what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

5. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the school as a whole (both curricular and co-curricular), what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Work? Other?

6. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the community outside of school class, what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Work? Other?
Appendix K

Second Interview: ESL students

The questions will be similar to the first interview with the exception of added questions asking about change (See this page for an example)

Nature of overall experience

1. If I were in your ESL subject classroom, what would I see you doing…
   - with the course material? Has this changed since our first interview?
   - with your teacher? Has this changed since our first interview?
   - with your peers? Has this changed since our first interview?
   - alone? Has this changed since our first interview?

2. How would you describe your feelings about being in a class with multi-level groupings? Has your view changed?

3. Does the student’s level affect how she or he feels in the multi-level classroom? For example, does a level A student feel differently than a level E student? Do you feel differently now from in our first interview?

4. Is the amount of time your teacher spends with you affected in a multi-level class? Has this changed since our last meeting?

5. In a multi-level class, are there more problems among students because of the needs of the different levels of English? Has your view on this changed?

6. How would you describe the activities for students in a multi-level classroom since our last meeting? Can all students do the same activities? Have your feelings changed?

7. Would you say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students to work together than a class with students at the same level? Is that a reason to have a multi-level class? Do you feel the same as before? If no, please describe how you feel now.

8. Would you say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students to mix with other students from different cultures? Has this changed since our first interview
9. In your multi-level class, do you feel that teachers can be more flexible with the curriculum expectations? Do you feel that it is acceptable to not cover the course work in a multi-level classroom? Does that worry you? Has your view changed?

10. When you think of the multi-level classroom, would you feel happy with the teacher teaching less where when you have a problem, first, you would ask your friends for help and then the teacher? Would you be OK taking on more responsibility for your learning? Do you feel differently now from in our first interview?

11. Do you think that it is important for the ESL English teacher (ESL Curriculum Leader) to work with your ESL teacher of this class? Why?

Participation

1. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in the ESL subject classroom? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

2. When you think of your ESL subject class, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

3. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in co-curricular activities? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

4. When you think of the school, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate in co-curricular activities? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

5. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you feel happy with your participation in the community outside of school? One means very unhappy and ten means very happy.

6. When you think of Canadian society, what is it about the class that helps you to actively participate in the community outside of school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

7. What would help increase your participation in this ESL subject classroom? Is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities?

8. If you think of your ESL subject classroom, is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities, which would help increase your participation in the co-curricular activities in the school?
9. If you think of your ESL subject classroom, is there something related to your teacher, peers, you, or activities, which would help increase your participation in the community outside of school?

10. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people that prevent you from participating in that class? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

11. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people in that class that prevent you from participating in the co-curricular activities in the school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

12. When you picture yourself in the ESL subject classroom, are there things or people in that class that prevent you from participating in the community outside of school? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

Identity


4. If I were to walk into the ESL classroom, what roles would I see you playing? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?

5. If I were to walk into the school, what roles would I see you playing in co-curricular activities? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?
6. If I were to watch you in the community outside of school, what roles do you play in Canadian society? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer?

Motivation

1. When you think of the ESL classroom, how motivated do you feel in this class? Rate your answer on a scale of one to ten. One means you do not want to be studying there. Ten means that you want to be studying in that classroom every day.

2. When you think of the ESL classroom, what is it about the class that makes you feel the most motivated to learn? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

3. When you think of the ESL classroom, what is it about the class that makes you feel the least motivated to learn? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

4. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the class, what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Activities? Other?

5. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the school as a whole (both curricular and co-curricular), what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Work? Other?

6. If you could add something to the ESL classroom to make you feel more motivated in the community outside of school class, what would it be? Teacher? Peers? You? Work? Other?
Appendix L

First Interview: ESL teacher

**Background**

1. Could you please tell me about yourself?

- Country of origin
- Language and culture
- Previous education
- Teaching Timetable
- Teaching experience
- ESL qualifications
- ESL Teaching experience
- ESL Professional Development

**Nature of overall experience**

1. As the ESL teacher of this class, what would I see you doing…

- with the course material?
- with your students?
- with your lesson preparation?

2. How would you describe your feelings about teaching a class with multi-level groupings?

3. How would you describe your students’ feelings about being in a class with multi-level groupings? Does the student’s level affect how she or he responds to the multi-level classroom? For example, does a level A student feel differently than a level E student?

4. How is your contact time with students affected in a multi-level class?

5. When you think of your classroom management in a multi-level class, how would you describe it?

6. How would you describe the activities you create for students in a multi-level classroom? Can all students do the same activities?
7. Would say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students to interact with each other than a class with students at the same level?

8. Would you say that a multi-level class creates more opportunities for students mix with other students from different cultures? Is that a good reason for having multi-level groupings in classes?

9. In your multi-level class, do you feel that you can be more flexible with the curriculum expectations? Do you feel that it is acceptable to not cover the expectations in a multi-level classroom?

10. When you think of the multi-level classroom, do you see yourself as a facilitator and the students as self-directed learners with peer assistance?

11. As the ESL teacher of this class, how do you interact with the ESL Curriculum Leader?

**Participation**

1. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you think your students are happy with their participation in the ESL classroom? One means **very unhappy** and ten means **very happy**.


3. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you think your students are happy with their participation in co-curricular activities? One means **very unhappy** and ten means **very happy**.


5. On a scale of one to ten, to what extent do you think your students are happy with their participation in the community outside of school? One means **very unhappy** and ten means **very happy**.

7. What support would you like to be made available for you to help increase their participation in the ESL classroom?

8. What support would you like to be made available for you in the classroom to help increase their participation in the co-curricular activities in the school?

9. What support would you like to be made available for you in the classroom to help increase their participation in the community outside of school?

10. When you picture yourself in the ESL classroom, what challenges of this class affect your ability to help students participate?

11. When you picture yourself in the ESL classroom, what challenges of this class affect your ability to help students participate in the co-curricular activities in the school?

12. When you picture yourself in the ESL classroom, what challenges of this class affect your ability to help students participate in the community outside of school?

Identity

1. How would you describe your students in the ESL classroom? Relationship with you? Relationship with other students in the same level? Relationship with other students in a different level? Relationship with work?

2. How would you describe your students in the school? Relationship with teachers? Relationship with other students? Relationship with co-curricular activities?

3. How would you describe your students in Canadian society outside of school? Relationship with parents? Relationship with peers? Relationship with neighbours? Relationship with other activities such as work?

4. If I were to walk into the ESL classroom, what roles would I see these students playing? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer? Do the roles change depending on their level of English?

5. If I were to walk into the school, what roles would I see students playing? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer? Do the roles change depending on their level of English?
6. If I were to watch your students outside of school, what roles would I see them playing in Canadian society? Leader? Follower? Clown? Helper? Starter? Withdrawer? Harmonizer? Do the roles change depending on their level of English?

Motivation

1. When you think of the ESL classroom, how motivated do you feel in that class? Rate your answer on a scale of one to ten. One means you do not want to be teaching this class. Ten means that you want to be teaching in that classroom every day.

2. When you think of the ESL classroom, how motivated do you think your students feel in that class? Rate your answer on a scale of one to ten. One means they do not want to be in this class. Ten means that they feel excited about studying in that classroom every day.

3. When you think of the ESL classroom, what makes you feel the most motivated to teach?

4. When you think of the ESL classroom, what do you think makes your students feel the most motivated to learn?

5. When you think of the ESL classroom, what makes you feel the least motivated?

6. When you think of the ESL classroom, what makes your students feel the least motivated?

7. If you could add elements to the classroom to make you feel more motivated, what would they be?

8. If you could add elements to the classroom to make your students feel more motivated, what would they be?
Appendix M

Second Interview: ESL teacher

The questions will be similar to the first interview with the exception of added questions asking about change (See Second Interview: ESL Students for an example)
Appendix N

Information letter to the questionnaire teacher from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead)

Date
(address of school)

Dear (name of teacher):

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. As we have discussed, I am writing to you to formally request your participation in my research at your school, because of your involvement in teaching ESL subject classes which contain students who are multi-level in their English language ability.

As part of my thesis research, I want to find out more about ESL students’ experience learning in a multi-level classroom. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, and your principal, as has been explained by Ms. XXXXXX, I am now requesting you to take an on-line questionnaire during the first semester about your experience teaching ESL subject classes. The data gathered from this questionnaire will be used in conjunction with my case study research that will be occurring in a multi-level ESL language ability classroom in your school.

Also, on a one-time basis, I will ask students who are on the ESL School List and other ESL subject teachers to fill out on-line questionnaire. Permission to proceed with the above
mentioned case study, and questionnaires will be sought from teachers, students’ parents, and students and will be held in confidence by Ms. XXXXX.

If you agree to participate, click on the following web address that will lead you directly to the on-line questionnaire: http://www.XXXXXX. It takes about 30 minutes to complete. The technology driving this questionnaire will allow you to access the questionnaire only once. Be sure to set aside 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting.

You may rest assured that your privacy will be protected at all times. The on-line questionnaire does not require you to identify yourself. The results of the questionnaire auto-tabulate; therefore, there is no way to trace responses back to specific individuals. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request.

Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to participate in this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL students and ESL teachers in the future; however, allow me to stress that you are under no obligation to agree to participate. If you are interested in participating, go to the web site indicated and by clicking on “Submit” you indicate your consent to be a part of my research.
If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person, by telephone, or through e-mail. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
ESL STUDENTS!!!
(All ESL Students on the School List)
Tell Us What You Think!
Consider Participating in an
ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Meeting Date:  Lunch -Wednesday November 14, 2007

Location:  Library

Ms. Soto Gordon and Ms. XXXXX will…

- answer questions
- distribute letters of permission/consent forms
General Information

➢ **What?** You are invited to participate in Ms. Soto Gordon’s 30 minute on-line questionnaire which examines ESL students’ experiences in multi-level ability classes. (Multi-level = Students have a variety of levels of English)

➢ **Why?** Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why some ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, *A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?* may help to shed some light on these issues.

➢ **How? When?** At the meeting, you will be given letters of permission/consent forms. If you chose to participate, Ms. XXXXX will distribute the website information to you in December – January so that you can access the on-line questionnaire.

Recruitment

➢ For privacy reasons, please return your consent forms to Ms. XXXXX by Friday November 30, 2007. Ms. Soto Gordon will not know who volunteered and who did not volunteer.
Appendix P

Letter to the questionnaire ESL students from the researcher
(to be printed on OISE letterhead/to be translated as necessary)

Date
Dear…

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to you to formally request that you participate in this study.

As part of my research, I would like to find out more about English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom. This classroom has a wide range of students: beginner ESL students are mixed with advanced ESL students. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, the school principal and ESL teachers, as has been explained by Ms. XXXXXX, I am now requesting that, during the first semester (September 2007-January 2008) you, as a student on the ESL School List, participate in an on-line questionnaire about your experience in multi-level ESL classrooms. The data gathered from this questionnaire will be used in conjunction with my case study research that will be occurring in a multi-level ESL language ability classroom in your school. Permission to proceed with the above mentioned case study, and questionnaires will be sought from the teachers, students’ parents and students and will be held in confidence by Ms. XXXXXX.
Once you agree to participate by providing Ms. XXXXXX with your consent forms (yours and your parents’), you will receive the web site address from Ms. XXXXXX. The questionnaire takes about 30 minutes to complete. The technology driving this questionnaire will allow you to access the questionnaire only once. Be sure to set aside 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting.

You may rest assured that your privacy will be protected at all times. The on-line questionnaire does not require you to identify yourself. The results of the questionnaire auto-tabulate; therefore, there is no way to trace responses back to specific individuals. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request.

Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to participate in this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL students and ESL teachers in the future; however, allow me to stress that you are under no obligation to agree to participate. You may, of course, refuse permission at any time without giving reason and without your withdrawal affecting your school program or marks.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it with your parents’ consent form to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided. You may keep the letter for future reference. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation.
If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person at school, or by telephone. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the student)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Please complete, sign and return to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided with your guardians’/parents’ consent form.

FOR THE STUDENT: Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, _____________________________, agree to participate in this study which involves taking the on-line questionnaire that was described in the attached letter. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without my withdrawal affecting my marks nor the instruction I will receive.

☐ I, _____________________________, do not wish to participate in this study which involves taking the on-line questionnaire that was described in the attached letter. I understand that my non-participation will not affect my marks nor the instruction I will receive.

Signature of student: ______________________________________________________

Name (please print): ______________________________________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix Q

Letter to the ESL questionnaire parents from the researcher

(to be printed on OISE letterhead/to be translated as necessary)

Date
(name and address of the school)
Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am writing to you to formally request permission for your son or daughter to participate in this study.

As part of my research, I would like to find out more about English as a second language (ESL) students’ experiences in a multi-level classroom. This classroom has a wide range of students: beginner ESL students are mixed with advanced ESL students. In particular, I wish to examine how this classroom structure affects students’ participation, identity formation and development, and motivation. Through investigating ESL students’ experiences in the classroom, we may be able to better understand why ESL students often experience poor academic achievement, drop out, or choose not to continue with post secondary education. Therefore, this research entitled, A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices? may help to shed some light on these issues.

Having already received permission from the University of Toronto, the school board, the principal, and ESL teachers, as has been explained by Ms. XXXXXX to your child, I am now requesting your permission, during the first semester (September 2007-January 2008), to allow your child, who is a student on the ESL School List, to participate in an on-line questionnaire about his or her experience in multi-level ESL classrooms. The data gathered from this questionnaire will be used in conjunction with my case study research that will be occurring in a multi-level ESL language ability classroom in your child’s school. Permission to proceed with the above mentioned case study, and questionnaires will be sought from the teachers, students’ parents and students and will be held in confidence by Ms. XXXXXX.
If you allow your son or daughter to participate, they will receive the web site address from Ms. XXXXXX. The questionnaire takes about 30 minutes to complete. The technology driving this questionnaire will allow him or her to access the questionnaire only once. He or she must be sure to set aside 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting.

You may rest assured that his or her privacy will be protected at all times. The on-line questionnaire does not require you to identify yourself. The results of the questionnaire auto-tabulate; therefore, there is no way to trace responses back to specific individuals. The raw data gathered through this study will be kept confidential, known only to me and the members of my thesis committee. In addition, a summary of the thesis will also be made available upon request.

Be also assured that the identity of the board, the school, the teacher and the students will be kept confidential in the thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications. Each student’s and the teacher’s name will be replaced by a pseudonym. Moreover, I will take great care to assure that each student’s and the teacher’s identity will not be revealed in any other fashion, such as through background information. All data and tape recordings will be kept in locked files accessible only to me and will be destroyed ten years after the end of the study.

I hope that you will agree to allow your child to participate in this study as it may prove beneficial to ESL students and ESL teachers in the future; however, allow me to stress that you are under no obligation to agree to participate. You may, of course, refuse permission, or your child may refuse, or may withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason and without his or her withdrawal affecting his or her school program or marks.

Please complete the attached consent form and return it with your child’s consent form to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided. You may keep the letter for future reference. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation.
If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me in person at school, or by telephone. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné at OISE, University of Toronto, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, 252 Bloor Street West, XXX, XXX ext. XXX.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Soto Gordon
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
XXX, extension XXX
e-mail-XXX
Consent Form
(to be signed by the parent/guardian)

Title of the Research: A case study on multi-level language ability groupings in an ESL secondary school classroom: Are we making the right choices?

Name of the Researcher: Stephanie Soto Gordon

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Please complete, sign and return to Ms. XXXXXX in the envelope provided with your son/daughter’s consent form.

FOR THE PARENT/GUARDIAN: Please check one of the two boxes.

☐ I, ______________________________(your name) agree to allow my son/daughter ______________________________ (the name of your son or daughter) to participate in this study which involves taking the on-line questionnaire that was described in the attached letter. I understand that my son/daughter may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without his or her withdrawal affecting his/her marks nor the instruction he/she will receive.

☐ I, ______________________________(your name) do not wish that my son/daughter ______________________________ (the name of your son or daughter) participate in this study which involves taking the on-line questionnaire that was described in the attached letter. I understand that his/her non-participation will not affect his/her marks nor the instruction he/she will receive.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____________________Name (please print): _____________________

Date: ______________________________
What is your ESL experience?
I, Ms. Soto Gordon, would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions about your ESL experience. This questionnaire is part of my Ph. D. research for my thesis at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Your answers will help me better understand your feelings about your ESL experience with a focus on your participation, your identity formation and development, and your motivation in these classes. Please be assured that you do not have to provide your name.

Also, this is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. I am really interested in your personal opinions. A summary of all participants’ opinions will be shared with various audiences. If you do not want to answer a question, just leave it blank. This questionnaire will take you about 30 minutes to complete.

The technology driving this questionnaire will allow you to access the questionnaire only once so you cannot return to your answers if you do not finish; you will have to start from the beginning again; therefore, be sure that you set about 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. I want to remind you that it is not possible to select more than one answer.

Thank you very much for agreeing to answer these questions.

please continue
Student Questionnaire

PART A.

BACKGROUND:

In the following section, I would like you to answer the questions by filling in the appropriate response to the question:

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your country of birth?

3. What countries did you live in before coming to Canada?

4. What is your first language?

5. When did you come to Canada?

6. What other languages do you speak?

7. What was the last grade you finished before coming to Canada?
8. How many years did you study English before coming to Canada?


10. What level of ESL are you now in? (ESLA08, ESLB08, ESLC08, ESLD08, ESLE08, ENG 3U8, FINISHED ESL COURSES)

11. What courses are you taking this year?


13. Outside of class, name the school activities in which you participate. (Clubs, Sports, Other)

14. Outside of school, name the activities in which you participate? (Clubs, Sports, Work, Other)

-- save and continue --
Student Questionnaire

PART B.

INSTRUCTIONS:

In the following sections, there are a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. Please give your opinion by clicking on the statement that best shows your feelings. Please note: "multi-level" and "different levels of English" refer to students from ESLA08, ESLB08, ESLC08, ESLD08, ESLE08, and ENG3U8.

Nature of Overall Experience

15. Classes that have students mixed together from different levels of English are enjoyable because we do more group work.

16. I like working with students who have the same level of English.
17. Teachers are available to provide me with the time I need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.

18. In multi-level classes, sometimes I wait a long time to get help from my teacher because she or he is busy helping others students.

19. When I think about my class with students mixed together from different levels of English, sometimes I find the work too easy.

20. In classes that have students from different levels of English, I am able to do a lot of independent work with help from my friends and little help from my teacher.

21. While I work in my class with students from different levels of English, I get angry because everyone is not at the same level of English.

22. Classes with students who have different levels of English are fun because there are many group activities.

23. In classes with different levels of English, most of the students can do work independently with little help from the teacher.

24. Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than other classes.

25. I think that multi-level classes make it difficult for the teacher to meet all of our needs because often I feel unchallenged by the work.
26. In classes with different levels of English, teachers have different work for beginner ESL students.

27. There are times when I feel angry because the other students take the teacher’s time and I am left waiting and feeling bored.

28. I like working in groups with students who have a different level of English.

29. Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English.

30. The advanced ESL students have different work in classes with different levels of English.
**Student Questionnaire**

*Participation*

31. I am happy to take part in the classes that have students from different levels of English.

--- select one ---

32. I am happy with my involvement in activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.

--- select one ---

33. I am happy with my participation in the community outside of school in such activities as jobs and clubs.

--- select one ---

34. When I think of my multi-level class, I understand the activities and I can participate easily because I get lots of support from my teachers.

--- select one ---

35. At school, I can be in clubs, sports, music, and drama because I get lots of support from my teachers in multi-level classes.

--- select one ---

36. I can have jobs and be in clubs in the community outside of school because I get lots of support from my teachers in multi-level classes.

--- select one ---

37. In the classes that have students from all different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help increase my ability to take part in the class.

--- select one ---

38. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I
would like the teacher to do more to help me get involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama.

--- select one ---

39. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I would like the teacher to do more to help me participate in the community outside of school with jobs and clubs.

--- select one ---

40. When I am in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I do feel welcomed by other students and teachers.

--- select one ---

41. If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, then I do feel welcomed in the school.

--- select one ---

42. If I do feel welcomed by other students and teacher in my classes that have students from all levels of English, I also do feel welcomed in the community outside of school.

--- select one ---
Student Questionnaire

Identity

43. When I picture myself in classes that have students from different levels of English, I see myself as a leader because I am a person who often starts activities and who volunteers answers.

--- select one ---

44. When I picture myself in classes that have students from different levels of English, I feel like I belong there.

--- select one ---

45. When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I feel like I have a lot to offer to teams, or clubs.

--- select one ---

46. When I picture myself in clubs or sports activities, I see myself as a confident participant because I am a person who signs up for teams, or clubs.

--- select one ---

47. When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I see myself as an important member because I work or I am in a club or an organization.

--- select one ---

48. When I picture myself in the community outside of the school, I feel that I am someone who fits into Canadian life.

--- select one ---

49. If I am in classes that have students from different levels of English, I am sometimes afraid to raise my hand to join in on discussions.
50. When I am in classes with students from different levels of English, I am able to ask for help from other students.

51. When there is a school club that interests me, I am too shy to join.

52. If I were involved in clubs, sports, music, and drama, I am able to say what I think when we talk in a group.

53. Outside of school, I am too shy to get involved in activities.

54. In the community where I live, I ask for help from people when I need it.
Motivation

55. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, I am excited about studying.

--- select one ---

56. If there were extra work to do for multi-level classes, I would volunteer to do it because I know that it is good for my learning.

--- select one ---

57. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, the teacher helps me to feel positively about my classroom experience.

--- select one ---

58. When there are classes that have students from different levels of English, I am happy that the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.

--- select one ---

59. When I am in classes that have students from different levels of English, I feel nervous to speak because other students at different levels may laugh at me.

--- select one ---

60. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.

--- select one ---

61. I feel that I have a choice to be placed in classes that have students from different levels of English.

--- select one ---

62. In classes that have students from different levels of English, my teachers let us make decisions about what we study and when we study.
63. Students work well together in classes that have students from different levels of English.

64. When I am doing group-work in classes that have students from different levels of English, I like working with students who are at the same level as I am.

65. If there is a lot of noise in the classes that have students from different levels of English, I am able to keep working because I move away from the noise.

66. If I get frustrated in classes that have students from different levels of English, I remind myself of how important it is for my future to keep working hard.
Student Questionnaire

Thank you for your time.
Appendix S

Teacher Questionnaire

What is your ESL teaching experience?
I, Stephanie Soto Gordon, would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions about your teaching in ESL multi-level classes or classes with students who have different levels of English. This questionnaire is part of my Ph. D. research for my thesis at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Your answers will help me better understand your feelings about your ESL students' experience with a focus on their participation, identity formation and development, and motivation in these classes and beyond. Please be assured that you do not have to provide your name.

Also, this is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. I am really interested in your personal opinions. A summary of these findings will be shared with a various audiences. If you do not want to answer a question, just leave it blank. This questionnaire will take you about 30 minutes to complete.

The technology driving this questionnaire will allow you to access the questionnaire only once so you cannot return to your answers if you do not finish; you will have to start from the beginning again; therefore, be sure that you set about 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. I want to remind you that it is not possible to select more than one answer.

Thank you very much for agreeing to answer these questions.

please continue
Teacher Questionnaire

PART A.

BACKGROUND:

In the following section, I would like you to answer the questions by filling in the appropriate response to the question:

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your country of birth?

3. If you lived in other countries, besides your country of birth before coming to Canada, which ones were they?

4. What is your first language?

5. What other languages do you speak?

6. What subjects are you qualified to teach?
7. What are the classes that you currently teach?

8. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

9. What ESL qualifications do you hold?

10. What ESL professional development have you done?

11. How many years of ESL teaching experience do you have?
Teacher Questionnaire

PART B.

INSTRUCTIONS:
In the following sections, there are a number of statements relating to ESL students with which some people agree and others disagree. I would like you to give your opinion by clicking on the statement that best shows your feelings. *Please note: "multi-level" and “different levels of English” refer to students from ESLA08, ESLB08, ESLC08, ESLD08, ESLE08, and ENG 3U8.

Nature of Overall Experience

12. Classes that have ESL students mixed together from different levels of English are enjoyable for the students.

--- select one ---

13. Students prefer working with students who have the same level of English.
14. Teachers are not available to provide students with the time they need for learning in classes where students have different levels of English.

15. Sometimes students from multi-level classes wait a long time to get help from me because I am too busy helping others.

16. When I think about my classes with different levels of English, sometimes some students find the work too easy because I cannot address everyone’s academic needs.

17. In classes that contain students from different levels of English, students are able to do a lot of independent work with help from their friends and little help from me, the teacher.

18. While I work in a class with students from different levels of English, students get frustrated because everyone is not at the same level of English.

19. Classes with students who have different levels of English are fun for students because there are many group activities.

20. In classes with different levels of English, most of the students can do work independently with little help from the teacher.

21. Classes that have students from different levels of English are excellent because they provide more opportunities for students from different cultures to mix than in other classes.
22. I think that multi-level classes make it difficult for the teacher to meet all of the students’ needs because some students often feel unchallenged by the work.

23. In classes with different levels of English, teachers have different assignments for beginner ESL students.

24. There are times when students feel angry because the other students take the teacher time and they are left waiting and feeling bored.

25. I like working in groups with students who have different levels of English.

26. Having the opportunity to work with students from other cultures is a good reason to have classes with students from different levels of English.

27. The advanced ESL students have different assignments in classes with different levels of English.

28. I feel like I cannot get through the curriculum when I have classes with different levels of English.
Teacher Questionnaire

Participation

29. I am happy with my students’ participation in the classes that have students from different levels of English.

--- select one ---

30. When thinking of the students from classes with different levels of English, I am happy with students’ participation in co-curricular activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.

--- select one ---

31. When thinking of the students from classes with different levels of English, I am happy with students’ participation in the community outside of school.

--- select one ---

32. When I think of the classes that have students from different levels of English, students understand the activities and they can participate easily.

--- select one ---

33. When I think of the school, students can participate in co-curricular activities such as clubs, sports, music, and drama because they get lots of support from their teachers in the classes with students who have different levels of English.

--- select one ---

34. Students can participate in the community outside of school in such activities as jobs and clubs because they get lots of support from
their teachers in the classes with students who have different levels of English.

35. Students would like extra help from the teacher to help increase their participation in the classes that have students from different levels of English.

36. In the classes with students who have different levels of English, students would like extra help from the teacher so that students could increase their participation in the co-curricular activities in the school such as clubs, sports, music, and drama.

37. When students are in classes that have different levels of English, some students do not feel welcomed by their peers and teachers.

38. If students do not feel welcomed by their peers and teacher in their classes that have students from different levels of English, then they also may not feel welcomed in the school community.

39. If students do not feel welcomed by their peers and teacher in their classes with different levels of English, then they also may not feel welcomed in the community where they live.
Teacher Questionnaire

Identity

40. When students picture themselves in classes that have students from different levels of English, they see themselves as leaders because they are people who often start activities and volunteer answers.

--- select one ---

41. When students picture themselves in classes that have students from different levels of English, they feel like they belong there.

--- select one ---

42. When thinking of the students from classes with different levels of English, students picture themselves as having a lot to offer to co-curricular activities.

--- select one ---

43. When thinking of the students from classes with different levels of English, students picture themselves in co-curricular activities as confident participants because they are people who sign up for teams, or clubs.

--- select one ---

44. When students from multi-level language ability classes picture themselves in the community outside of the school, they see themselves as important members because they work or they are in a club or an organization.
45. When students from multi-level language ability classes picture themselves in the community outside of the school, they feel that they fit into Canadian society.

46. If students are in classes that have students from different levels of English, students are sometimes afraid to raise their hand to join in on discussions.

47. When students are in classes with other students from different levels of English, they are able to ask for help from the other students.

48. When there is a school club that interests the students from multi-level language ability classes, they are too shy to join.

49. If students from multi-level language ability classes are involved in a co-curricular activity such as clubs, sports, music, and drama, they are able to say what they think when they talk in a group.

50. Outside of school, students from multi-level language ability classes are embarrassed to get involved in activities.

51. In the community where students from multi-level language ability classes live, students ask for help from people when they need it.
Teacher Questionnaire

Motivation

52. In the classes with different levels of English, students are excited about studying.

--- select one ---

53. If there were extra work to do for classes that have students from different levels of English, students would volunteer to do it because they know that it is good for their learning.

--- select one ---

54. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, the teacher helps students feel positively about their classroom experience.

--- select one ---

55. When there are classes with different levels of English, the teacher makes herself available to help everyone.

--- select one ---

56. When students are in classes that have students from different levels of English, some students feel nervous to speak because they fear other students at different levels may laugh at them.

--- select one ---
57. In the classes that have students from different levels of English, students help each other.

--- select one ---

58. Students feel that they have a choice to be placed in classes that have students from different levels of English.

--- select one ---

59. In the multi-level language ability classes, teachers allow students to make decisions about what they study and when they study.

--- select one ---

60. There is often cooperation among students in classes that have students from different levels of English.

--- select one ---

61. When students participate in group-work activities, in classes that have different levels of English, students prefer working with students who are at the same level.

--- select one ---

62. If there is a lot of noise in the classes that have students from different levels of English, students are able to keep working because they move away from the noise.

--- select one ---

63. If students get frustrated in classes that have student from different levels of English, students remind themselves of how important it is for their future to keep working hard.

--- select one ---
Teacher Questionnaire

Thank you for your time.