The Power of Social Studies Curriculum: Inclusion and Awareness of

English Language Learners (ELLs)

By

Parastou Ziadlou

A Major Research Project submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Teaching

Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Parastou Ziadlou
Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
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Abstract

Nurturing citizenship in all students, especially English Language Learners (ELL) is the main goal of Social Studies and English as a Second Language ESL curriculum. In order for ELLs to construct a new identity and be successful in merging into the new language, culture, and academic lives, there must be an emphasis on immersing them both in their social and educational lives. Engaging in meaningful conversations would improve their creativity, cognitive thinking, and problem-solving skills. The question that this dissertation explores is ‘How is a small sample of social science teachers modifying their instruction to support the social science learning of their ELLs in nurturing responsible Canadian citizens, and what outcomes do they observe from these students? This qualitative research has drawn on some case-study characteristics for recruiting participants from a school that operates separate Social Studies courses for ELLs. Both participants in this study have more than five years experience in teaching Social Studies content to ELLs and are active participants in extracurricular that involves ELLs as well. The chapters of this work focus on the importance of Social Studies curriculum, instructional strategies, challenges, and further program recommendations in addressing the topic of nurturing responsible citizenship in ELLs. According to literature gathered and research participants, it is crucial to address Social Studies content with ELLs, since it is essential to offer them a different perspective and knowledge on the world and the social matters around them. The results also indicate, student success in all subjects is achieved when teachers’ standards are high for all students and the learning is facilitated through students’ differentiated needs. The Power of Social Studies Education is dependant of teachers’ engagement in the content and facilitation of instructions for all learners, including the ELLs, which is the main source of nurturing responsible citizenship in our future youths.

Keywords

English Language Learners, Social Studies, Critical Thinking, Integration of ELLs
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The study of social sciences has a crucial role in preparing students to become active responsible citizens. Social science classes are an opportunity for students to learn and enact literacy skills, including reading, writing, and critical thinking as well as civic literacy skills, including historical thinking, perspective-taking, decision-making, and active participation (Ministry of Ed., 2012). Given their role in fostering citizenship and literacy, they have a unique and relevant role to play in the education of English Language Learners (ELLs).

These students may be Canadian born or recently arrived from other countries. They come from diverse backgrounds and school experiences, and have a wide variety of strengths and needs. English language learners bring a wide variety of life situations, understandings and a range of educational experiences to Ontario schools (Ministry of Ed., 2001). Teachers are then given the opportunity to enrich the learning of all students in the classroom. The role of the school and the teacher is critical in supporting their identities and development as bilingual learners, and in helping ELLs shape a vision of the future as Canadian citizens in a global economy (Ministry of Ed., 2001). Research has suggested that the role of education is also to help ensure a knowledgeable citizenry, able to participate effectively in the governance and political processes of the nation (Garii, 2000).

In this chapter, I describe the purpose of this study, and the learning community who will benefit from this study. I then outline the research questions that are set to guide my research. Next, I provide my reflexive positioning and background on this topic, which sets the ground for my interest and commitment to this topic. Finally, I provide an overview of
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the next chapters in my dissertation paper.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to learn how a small sample of social science teachers is supporting the social science education of their ELL students. Social Studies curriculum developers have emphasized the need to be critically literate in order to synthesize information, make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and thrive in an ever-changing global community (Social Studies Curriculum, 2013). The benefit of Social Studies is that it brings social matters closer to students for richer discussions. It is extremely important for ELLs because they tend to associate only with their own community once they immigrate to a different country, and to be successful, one has to grow outside of their community and face the societal challenges that limit their opportunities. Otherwise, they are bound to one culture, which sets them up to internalize the discriminations and limitations that they face without seeking to move beyond them and pursue the horizons for greater success. The prospect stakeholders who will ultimately benefit from this study will be teachers, administers, and curriculum developers in being aware of the ELLs’ needs for a successful growth as responsible citizens in the education system.

Literacy focuses on the four skills of reading, writing, communicating, and listening, which are best taught as transferable skills, when engaging in accomplishment of authentic tasks with consistent support and prompting throughout the task (Brown, 2007). The importance of reading skill is not only associated with Language Arts, but reading comprehension in the content areas is rather essential to students’ successful learning (Brown, 2007). ELLs are commonly mainstreamed in the general classes and are challenged
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to read and understand demanding subject matter in a decontextualized discourse style, which is even difficult for native English speakers due to its nature. Teachers who do not know about language acquisition rates can be misled, thinking that ELLs have reading disabilities because they can carry on conversations better than they can read academic texts (Brown, 2007). These teachers however, often do not take into account the limitation of the vocabulary and the use of extra linguistic features that are used to carry out a conversation (Brown, 2007).

The research problem that raises a concern in delivering effective methods of instruction to address ELLs’ needs, is the number of studies that have been conducted on the significance of teaching content subjects including, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Sciences. These studies have undermined the importance of teaching Social Studies content and widened the gap in literature on the importance of teaching critical thinking to these students through this highly critical content. As a result, the purpose of my study is to emphasize the critical aspects of teaching Social Studies content to all students regardless of their language knowledge or abilities, since it improves cognitive thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This is an important matter because the listed skills are transferable skills that should be used throughout people’s lives in making their everyday life decisions as responsible citizens.

1.2 Research Question

How is a small sample of social science teachers modifying their instruction to support the social science learning of their ELLs in nurturing responsible Canadian citizens, and what outcomes do they observe from these students?
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1.2.1 Subsidiary Questions

1. What challenges do these teachers encounter in this work, and how do they respond to these challenges? From their perspective, what further supports do they and ELL students need?
2. What instructional strategies and approaches do these teachers enact with their ELL students to respond to those challenges?
3. What factors encourage these teachers’ interest and efforts to support the social science learning of ELLs?
4. What range of outcomes have these teachers observed from their students? What indicators of learning do they see?
5. From their perspective, what is the importance of Social Studies instruction to ELLs?

1.3 Background of the Researcher

The interest in this study is inspired by my own experience when my family and I immigrated to Canada in 2001. Throughout my schooling, I was always a successful student with an A+ average, and the one that helped out others. That all changed, when my family and I migrated to Canada, and I registered at the nearest Public School to attend Grade Seven in a wealthy neighbourhood with very few immigrants at the time. I did not have prior knowledge of English, but I excelled in Mathematics and Science, while I still had to translate the content in my first language. I was placed in an ESL class at school during the time my peers were given Social Studies instructions, so that I would not be over exhausted with the content and the level of language that is used in content delivery. ESL classes had no curriculum to provide any instructional guide for teachers and most schools were not designating any funds to spend on resources to supplement these teachings.

On the other hand, coming from a really strong academic background with an interest on all subject areas, I was very curious of the kind of knowledge students would learn and assignments they would complete in their Social Studies classes. Since I figured I was not learning much in the ESL class, and had to transfer my study skills and be a self-motivated
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learner, I requested to join the general class with other students during the Social Studies period because those subjects were not being addressed in our ESL classes at all.

The homeroom teacher however, was not accommodating his teachings to suit my language proficiency, and had the kind of attitude that said; you chose to be here then deal with it! As a result, I was either given the same task as everybody else, or a very easy assignment with no significant purpose to accomplish, such as colouring the map of Canada on multiple occasions. Although I had a massive average drop during my first year in elementary school, I was not ready to give up, and continued to challenge myself on trying and accomplishing more difficult tasks. My parents also addressed the issue of my exclusion during the Social Studies period to my teacher, in which he reluctantly answered by explaining, as long as I excelled in Mathematics, I would not need to learn social sciences anytime soon.

I believe my teacher’s statement had a great impact in shaping my perception about importance of teaching social sciences. The critical thinking methods that are touched upon in these subjects are rarely overlooked in other subjects, hence it is essential to deliver these important life changing perceptions to all students without any judgment on their abilities to grasp the material through differentiated instruction criteria.

Even though I was discouraged in taking the Social Studies course in elementary school, my high school experience was much better in offering separate Social Studies courses such as History, Civics, and Careers for ELLs. After taking those courses, I became very interested in Canadian Social Studies and took other courses such as Law, Politics, Anthropology, Family Studies, World Issues, and so on that were not specialized ELL
courses and were offered to everyone. These Social Studies courses improved my English proficiency, and also helped me in choosing the Political Science program for my undergraduate degree. I then became interested in teaching and changing the dynamic between teachers and ELLs, which is why I pursued the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages TESOL program. This process and my practicum experiences helped me in achieving greater knowledge and interest on the content that is missing in teaching ELLs. This is the reason for my interest in taking this opportunity in my dissertation to conduct a research on the importance of Social Studies instruction to ELLs, and help the education community in understanding this fact and acting upon it.

As someone who has experienced feeling excluded in content areas especially in Social Studies, due to my experience with limited language proficiency, I developed significant interest in learning the possibilities of instructional modification and inclusive practices for ELLs. Teachers should promote the teaching of English as an International Language without a cultural or political bias. Such can be done through encouragement of multiculturalism and making their engagement meaningful by designing or modifying materials right out of the Social Studies curriculum document to engage students in communicative means with a balance between fluency and accuracy.

1.4 Overview

In structuring chapter two, I review research and literature in the areas of philosophical theories and language development, effective methods of language instruction, and best practices of Social Studies instruction, and critical thinking, and creativity. Chapter three focuses on the research methodology that is used in conducting my research, which is
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based on a qualitative multiple methods theory. This method will allow for multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and other documents. It will include procedures and information of the interviewees, which are two participant teachers who are already involved in such methods of teaching. In conducting my interviews, I tried to keep my biases out and designed open-ended questions that promoted critical thinking. Chapter four incorporates the detailed analysis of research findings for the collected data with a reference to the strengths and limitations of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Lastly, chapter five discusses the implications of my findings on my perspective as a prospect teacher and suggested recommendations for the educational community. In this chapter, I review and compare the gathered data from my participants in relation to the literature, and make recommendations for the educational community, and areas for further research in this context. I then conclude my thoughts and deliver my stance in relation to the gathered data.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature in the areas of effective methods of language instruction. More specifically, I focus on the themes related to communicative language ability and student-centered learning. I start by reviewing the literature in the areas of the most effective teaching strategies to enhance students’ language proficiency, challenges and bilingual students’ cognitive capacity, which is beyond their grammatical competency and tackles into their vocabulary comprehension and ability to carryout conversations.

Next, I focus on research on the importance of Social Studies instruction. I study the effective methods of instruction, critical thinking and nurturing intelligence, and creativity, which focuses on the importance of Social Studies content beyond a curriculum subject, rather as a critical, transferable, long-lasting set of skills. Finally, I examine the areas of thesis contribution through a review of research on previous studies that have focused on inclusive methods of instruction for ELLs, and discuss the challenges that teachers face during this process. I also incorporate the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and the importance of promoting social justice within the education system, since it is valuable and necessary in nurturing responsible citizenship in our students.

By reviewing these areas of study, I set the grounds for my future discussions on the effective methods of language and Social Studies instruction. I also incorporate the importance of Social Studies content and the skills that students would miss if they were not engaged in this content. These concepts are later analyzed in future chapters in relation to their effects on ELLs’ social everyday lives.
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2.1 Effective Methods of Language Instruction

New immigrant students, or those who speak their first language at home, would learn English at school, which is the language of instruction. These students have to learn the language in order to fit in with the school community, prepare for school, and pursue future goals such as, college, university, and career choices. Teachers however, take on different approaches in delivering their lessons such as, grammar translation and/or communicative approaches that make a significant difference in terms of improving students’ language proficiency (O'Donnell, 2013). In this section, I review research on important theories in language learning, communicative language ability, instructional challenges faced by teachers, and bilingual students’ cognitive capacity.

2.1.1 Important Theoretical Milestones in Language Learning

Cognitive development theorists have studied and examined child psychology and cognition for number of years. Piaget (1980), and Vygotsky’s (1978) theory on the role of language on children’s cognitive development has created a significant milestone within this scope. Piaget (1980) believed that language is a by-product of cognitive development, which reflects the individual’s level of cognitive maturity (O'Donnell, 2013). This process only develops when mental schema already exists prior to the expression of language. He adds that children must go through an internal process of discovery and invention of language to learn and develop it, which is called the discovery-based learning (O'Donnell, 2013). This is a constructivist-based approach in education that suggests we should learn by doing. As a result according to Piaget (1980), language development is largely unimportant because it is a by-product of our thought process (O'Donnell, 2013). This is to show that language
learning requires constant experimenting to learn the vocabulary and ways to deliver meaning.

On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) believes in inner speech that develops into verbal thinking through social transmission (O'Donnell, 2013). Therefore, language development is crucial because it is the most important tool for thought. Hence, children learn best through effective and intellectual conversations (O'Donnell, 2013). This is best achieved through cooperative learning tasks specifically designated for students’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that is the level at which students solve problems with sufficient support from teachers (O'Donnell, 2013).

Vygotsky’s (1978) Social Constructivism and Sociocultural Theory argues for a successful cognitive development through a dialectical relationship between the individual child and the social context in which they develop (O'Donnell, 2013). Childhood experiences are then considered as highly significant, which also contribute to their cognitive development (O'Donnell, 2013). Cognitive development is further enhanced through a student-centered environment, where scaffolding takes place. In this process children are taught and encouraged to use problem-solving skills, accomplishing tasks, and achieving their higher goals, which may be beyond their unassisted efforts (O'Donnell, 2013). As a result, once the child learns the task or skill, the educator would slowly reduce their support and limit their help to refinements, hints, or feedbacks (O'Donnell, 2013). This student-centered method of instruction has been advocated for many years for teachers’ use cross-curricular to release responsibility to learners and allow for their greater engagement and creativity in learning content (O'Donnell, 2013).
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Student-centered learning is a required criterion for academic credibility (Greener, 2015). This is considered as a vital role to be filled in designing that learning experience which will encourage the student to grasp the knowledge more efficiently (Greener, 2015). This means that students should not be seen as passive vessels to fill with knowledge, nor as willing or unwilling contributors to the curriculum, but as individuals who are given the choice to choose where they would like to put their attention (Greener, 2015). This idea is also taken from Freire (1997), who concludes that the more students accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend to adapt to the world as it is, and the less they develop the critical consciousness. This idea and teaching methods takes away from individuals’ ability of being autonomous learners (Freire, 1997).

By providing this clear choice to students to take responsibility for their own learning, they would be far more encouraged to show their creativity in their responses as critical thinkers. There is no doubt that this has been a difficult approach to accomplish, since it is argued that teachers cannot equally hold the center ground because many still only refer to the facilitation of learning as their priority (Greener, 2015). However, moving toward a student-centered learning that revolves around the problem-posing model engages students in dialogues and critical thinking (Freire, 1997). This method would essentially improve students’ language ability for giving them the freedom to explore and engage in meaningful conversations that would draw on their critical thinking skills (Freire, 1997). Teachers often use terms such as engagement, student-centered learning and inclusivity, without really trying to understand their students’ differences and their social standing in relation to their students (Freire, 1997). Since teachers are often raised and educated in this society, they too
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will be reinforcing the social dichotomy of the oppressors in their instructions as well (Freire, 1997). Such a system is against the goals of critical pedagogy, which is to provide individual freedom, social justice, and social change (Freire, 1997). Critical pedagogy is created as a result of ongoing academic and social debates that have taken a critical perspective on the nature of literacy that has challenged thinking about what it means to be literate and the forms of capital connected to being positioned as literate (Giampapa, 2010).

Through further investigation on language theorists, I came across language behaviourists and linguists, more particularly Skinner (1957) and Chomsky’s (1960s) theory, which was proposed in 1960s. Skinner’s explanation of language was that any acquisition was due to a learning process involving the shaping of grammar into a correct form by the re-enforcement of other stimulus (O'Donnell, 2013). This happens when correct grammar is positively re-enforced and will therefore be used in the future, yet incorrect grammar is negatively re-enforced and will not be used again (O'Donnell, 2013). This concludes his view, in which he believes in children having to know all aspects of language in order to form language properly by associating words with meaning that is important in the context of ELLs struggling with both language proficiency and content comprehension.

Chomsky (1960s) differed in his views for proposing, human grammar acquisition is an innate biological ability that all humans possess (O'Donnell, 2013). His theory involves the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that is an inborn linguistic processor with language making capacity, which transforms words into meaning and sentences into grammar (O'Donnell, 2013). Chomsky (1960s) therefore, believes that language develops through social interactions that are responsive and linguistically complex (O'Donnell, 2013). This
Theory again points out the importance of including ELLs in content area that engages their cognitive and linguistic abilities.

2.1.2 Communicative Language Ability

Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) model of “Communicative Language Ability” is the most widely spread multifaceted language theory used by the Canadian Language Benchmarks’ framework for literacy education (Littlemore & Low, 2006). Bachman’s (1996) theory defines the concept of competence and performance that are correlated in the process of language use, which was initiated in 1990 and twice revised in 1996 and 2010 (Littlemore et al., 2006). This theory, followed from earlier models of communicative competence, and was initiated as an alternative to Chomsky’s (1960s) theory. As a result, Bachman’s (1996) theory brought about a broader overview and is inherently associated with grammatical competence and the ability for its use in a communicative context (Littlemore et al., 2006).

As Bachman and Palmer (1996) have suggested, teachers responsible in dealing with ELLs should act as mediators in connecting the social sphere to the individual learners in classroom (Phakiti, 2008). This mediation will act as a bridge for students to internalize language and gain the confidence to develop their own voice within the new language. Some common mediating tools used in classroom instructions include, charts, visuals, books, newspapers, music, authentic listening tasks and so on (Phakiti, 2008). As a result, student success will be achieved through modified instruction and inclusion in practice.

As a result, I find Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) model of communicative language ability as the most complex and far-reaching due to its components of communicative competence. Furthermore, the development of Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 (CLB)
was in fact influenced by Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) model of Communicative Language Ability, which outlines the necessity of expressing meaning appropriately within social or cultural context of communication. This is mainly because of the CLB designers’ acceptance of Bachman’s (1996) model, in believing that language ability requires a combination of language knowledge (grammatical and pragmatic rules) and strategic competence (cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies) to manage language knowledge (CLB Support Kit, 2012). This means that language proficiency is best developed through meaningful conversations that engage students’ cognitive thinking.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) therefore is a highly valued model for keeping a balance between instruction of language through its grammatical usage, socio-pragmatic features, and communicative skills. Thus, Bachman’s (1996) model is a great representative of “Communicative Language Ability”, which has been revised many times to fit the necessary criteria in Language teaching that has been adopted by the CLB framework as the most effective method of communicative language training (CLB, 2013).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is used to promote learners’ progress of functional language through participating in communicative activities. Learners must also use their abilities to interact in order to interpret, express and negotiate the given task (CLB, 2013).

2.1.3 Instructional Challenges Faced by Teachers in Supporting ELLs

It is significantly important to consider the Ministry of Education’s role in justifying the support that is needed for each individual learner. Prior to 2011, they proposed the students who are deemed with exceptional circumstances, should have the right to an
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identification, review and placement committee (Parkeh, 2015). In 2011 however, the Ministry clarified its position by stating that the access to special education services is not contingent upon special education needs identification; it should rather be offered to any student who is perceived as potentially benefitting from special education services without a diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition (Parkeh, 2015). The reason being is due to the importance of addressing the needs of individual students based on the individual assessment of strengths and needs (Parkeh, 2015). Taking on this approach, teachers will have a higher responsibility towards their ELLs to address their special needs without viewing them as less competent, but students who need more prompts in order to successfully accomplish their tasks.

Teachers in general must acquire a broad range of knowledge and skills, including content knowledge, pedagogical and adolescent cognitive knowledge, and of course classroom creativity with the ability to reflect on practice (Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Moreover, language is the median through which students gain access to the material that is taught in class and assessed. As a result, of the great significance of the linkage between language and the curriculum, teachers who have ELLs in their class are best equipped to teach them if they have some knowledge of second language learning (Lucas et al., 2008).

Based on Lucas’ (2008) study on linguistically responsive teacher education, conversational language proficiency develops faster than academic language proficiency, students perform differently based on their native language proficiency, and that a safe environment with minimal anxiety on ELLs’ performance level in a second language will
result in higher achievement for these students (Lucas et al., 2008). Teachers should therefore, develop their understanding of ELLs’ diverse backgrounds, challenges and difficulties, and their strengths through professional development before they can actually make necessary changes to the curriculum by using the appropriate resources (Lucas et al., 2008).

Another study on ELL teacher Education by Campbell (2013) suggests that teachers are inadequately trained in providing instructions for ELLs in their classrooms because often their educators were not properly trained either (Roy-Campbell, 2013). This study provides information about ELLs’ diverse backgrounds in linguistic, cultural, and educational levels for teacher candidates to create a deeper understanding of students’ learning based on personal interests and achievement level. This study also concludes, aside from ELLs’ language teachers, and general education teachers should also get trained on how to prepare their students on other subject matters that are required to be taught to all students in order for them to pass that grade. In order to do this teachers are advised to be a part of the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages TESOL or other Bilingual Education Programs (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Though this may sound expensive or time consuming, teachers should get proper training in providing support for ELLs in their classroom, and through a unified organization everyone would receive similar training and gather the needed resources.

Yu Ren Dong (2004) suggests that ELLs placed in a regular classroom have to struggle with both coping with the new language and learning the other curriculum requirements. This study highlights four major areas in which teachers must really prepare
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themselves to increase their abilities in order to work with linguistically and culturally diverse students. These areas include developing a sincere empathy toward ELLs’ language difficulties and cultural differences, developing an increased understanding of the process of language acquisition, achieving the skills to adapt the curriculum and instruction to suit their cultural and language needs, and integrating discipline specific language and literacy skills into area of instruction (Yu Ren Dong, 2004). The awareness of the students’ hardships in life and academic standing would help teachers tailor their instruction and classroom discourse to the students’ linguistic and cognitive development; since with the increased number of ELLs in classrooms, they are not solely the responsibility of the ESL teachers but the responsibility of all teachers (Yu Ren Dong, 2004).

In providing a high quality education program for ELLs, the Ontario Education Ministry provides that the designated ESL/ELD teachers should be appropriately qualified and skilled (Ministry of Ed., 2012). The ESL/ELD program should also be linked to the content of the mainstream curriculum. The ministry also advises that it is better to provide differentiated instruction to groups of ELLs from the same grade or division rather than by level of proficiency in English. Also, research has shown that interaction among students of varying levels of language proficiency enhances language acquisition (Ministry of Ed., 2012).

Teaching in situations of linguistic and ethno-cultural diversity may present special challenges for teachers, most of whom have not received specific training or preparation for their role. All teachers need to be prepared to support ELLs so that they can improve their English and experience success with the Ontario curriculum (Ministry of Ed., 2012). Most
ELLs spend significant portions of each day in the mainstream program. Integration is a key component of education today and even students who are new to Canada and/or new to English need to spend some part of each day interacting with their English speaking peers in mainstream classrooms. Also, few ELLs in Ontario’s elementary schools receive direct support from an ESL/ELD teacher after their first year or two, and unfortunately many never see an ESL/ELD teacher at all. The Ministry however, has tried to ease the process for teachers by providing a number of resources to help teachers become more responsive to the needs of these students (Ministry of Ed., 2012).

Policymakers have increasingly insisted that ELLs, regardless of their fluency in English, be mainstreamed into standard courses with all other students, both classroom enactment of the curriculum and teacher education need considerable rethinking (Thornton & Cruz, 2008). Even modest training to teach ELLs can make a significant difference in the classroom. Effective instruction with content-specific subjects must include all learners especially when covering the Social Studies curriculum that includes an extensive number of topics such as history, world history, economics, and government (Thornton & Cruz, 2008).

2.1.4 Bilingual Students’ Cognitive Capacity

A study on English language learners and academic achievements has shown that upon reaching adequate proficiency in the language of schooling and testing, ELLs experience fewer academic disadvantages (Ardasheva, Tretter & Kinny, 2012). As a result, student achievement levels will likely increase on a significant level depending on the academic achievement of ELLs, who will eventually in a few years make up half of the student population in a lot of regions in North America (Ardasheva et al., 2012). What is
interesting is that bilinguals (regular use of two or more languages) are often associated with having certain cognitive advantages including, problem solving, better functioning of abstract representation, and attentional control, which has been often thought otherwise by teachers (Ardasheva et al., 2012). As cited by the authors, low levels of L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) academic language proficiency “limit children’s ability to benefit cognitively and academically from interaction with their environment through those languages”. The increase of knowledge in both languages will ultimately result in an “enhanced cognitive, linguistics, and academic growth” for bilinguals (Ardasheva et al., 2012). On the other hand, as the authors have suggested, there is a gap in studies on the achievement level of former ELLs who exited this status and no longer receive any language support to confirm their long-term progress (Ardasheva et al., 2012).

In addition, Brown’s (2007) study on supporting ELLs in content-reading concludes that teachers who do not know about acquisition rates for different English proficiencies can be misled, thinking that ELLs have reading disabilities because they can carry on conversations better than they can read academic texts. These teachers however, do not take into account the limitation of the vocabulary and the use of extra linguistic features that are used to carry out a conversation (Brown, 2007).

It takes five or more years for ELLs to catch up to their English-speaking peers in English language and literacy skills (Ministry of Ed., 2012). The data on newcomer ELLs also suggest that immigrant children eventually outperform their Canadian-born peers. This is a surprise to many teachers, but is consistent with Canadian data in a recent international study on the academic achievement of immigrant children (OECD, 2006). Another surprise
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for many is that students who begin learning English later eventually do better than their younger siblings even though they have more English to catch up on (Ministry of Ed., 2012). However, neither the Statistics Canada study nor the EQAO data show whether students of some language backgrounds perform better than others.

Most of these children have had all their schooling in Ontario. By Grade Three, most Canadian-born ELLs have had almost five years of immersion in an English-language school environment; by Grade Six, they have had almost eight years of English-language schooling in Ontario. Nevertheless, data show that Canadian-born ELLs do not catch up to ELLs by Grade Six. According to a Statistics Canada study however, Canadian-born children of immigrants catch up by Grade Eight and then go on to do somewhat better than the Canadian average (Worswick, 2001, & 2004).

This is to conclude that test scores do not tell the truth about the intelligence and ability of these students (Christensen, 2000). It is therefore important in this process to teach students that the standard language in this country, or any country is not based on the best language, but on the language that the powerful, the ruling class, has developed (Christensen, 2000). It is important to make this social blueprint transparent before correcting their mistakes; otherwise teachers could end up endorsing these power relations (Christensen, 2000).

2.2 The Importance of Social Studies Instruction

While sufficient attentions is consistently paid to the significance of supporting ELLs, generally little attention has been given to the importance of supporting ELLs in specific subject disciplines. While some studies stress the importance of modified teaching in subject
areas such as, language arts, mathematics, and science, to date there has not been any specific study devoted to supporting ELLs in the social science classroom.

2.2.1 Effective Methods of Social Studies Instruction

For years education researchers have studied greater and more effective methods of teaching to engage learners such as the use of radio, TV, whiteboards, and PowerPoint slides. However, our methods of teaching have changed very little in terms of making classroom content accessible to all learners. Researchers and educators need to look for more opportunities to conduct an inclusive classroom and instructions that are relevant and applicable to that community in particular (King, & Sen, 2013).

The Social Studies curriculum recognizes students’ need for opportunities to be taught to think critically, explore, and exercise choice and responsibilities by choosing their own topics for analysis in these subject areas (Social Studies Curriculum, 2013). The opportunity and freedom of allowing for choices and opportunities in teaching Social Studies does not mean ignorance and avoidance of significant content. This rather is a focus on mini-lessons on different topics, which provides a better chance for student engagement through in class conferences. This method of teaching Social Studies is significant in teaching academic skills needed for research projects in the higher grades and even for further college or university level education on how to justifiably pick topics for reports and papers by being critical of the facts and biases. These methods increase the chances of students to execute a further inquiry on their own (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005).

Social Studies, as the main subject focused on teaching social duties and responsible citizenship, plays an important role in allowing for a freedom of exploration around topics
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that challenge student thinking (Zemelman, 2005). As suggested by this study, the teaching of Social Studies should involve written work, observations, discussions, and debates (Zemelman, 2005). This does not mean that students with less language proficiencies should be exempted from discussions, since they can still think and formulate answers, but may need extra help with expressing their thoughts. As a matter of fact, Social Studies should build on students’ prior knowledge of their lives and communities, rather than assuming they know nothing about the subject matter (Zemelman, 2005). It is expected that Social Studies would also cover the full variety of cultures represented in that particular society and move beyond what is only written in historical texts. As a result, Social Studies evaluation should reflect the importance of students’ thinking, since the skills and habits learned in Social Studies are to be transferred for lifelong responsible learning, which is significant for ELLs to make connections in order to build on their knowledge and could possibly promote self-esteem (Zemelman, 2005).

Since the curriculum documents are limited in terms of presenting recent societal issues and events, it is suggested that teachers embrace our individuality and otherness from the mainstream in no way that is positive and strengthens the community. Teachers should also lead classroom instructions that requires explore the effects of bias on our understanding of the world events. Thus, educators are responsible to fulfill the expectations and guidelines provided by the curriculums, however, the main difference is brought about through our instructional methods and content delivery. This method would encourage critical thinking, which is the ability to look at various perspectives, and to make thoughtful decisions based on supporting details. The abilities to think critically and to participate effectively as a
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responsible citizen require students to ask viable questions, interpret multiple perspectives, and make decisions using their best judgment (Garii, 2000). The emphasis on the strategies that in brace cultural diverse city, and education for citizenship and multicultural society will positively contribute towards the development of young people, who have internalized the challenges of working and living in different cultural environments (Magsino, Long, & Theberge, 2000).

2.2.2 Critical Thinking and Nurturing Intelligence

Critical thinking is about pressing points and looking closely at everything including, factual claims and how people drive at their views and ideas (Cohen, 2015). The trouble with automatic and well-established says of thinking is that it can stop one from seeing new possibilities and ways of thinking. Critical thinking is universal thinking habits that require one to evaluate what they hear, read or think (Cohen, 2015).

*The fundamental cause of the trouble is that in the modern world the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt* (Cohen, 2015).

Some qualities that will be nurtured in critical thinkers include tolerance to hear divergent ideas, analytical skills to explore through those, confidence to present one's perspective on issues, curiosity to learn, and on the move to seek the truth (Cohen, 2015). Philosophical and mathematical skills are a solitary process, whereas critical thinking involves a deeper process that includes, challenging arguments, methods, ideas and findings, demanding the context and the background (Cohen, 2015).

Critical thinking is referred to as a high-level mental activity such as ‘credibility evaluation, assumption identification and determination of the strength of arguments or claims, which are far more enhanced from low-level mental activities, such as ‘recalling,
comparing, and classifying (Jeevanantham, 2005). It is considered a process that features analysis, evaluation, reasonableness and reflection for its criteria, which allows individuals to make judgments about the world. Using such criteria then means that critical judgment must be objective, impartial, non-arbitrary, and based on evidence of an appropriate kind and properly assessed (Jeevanantham, 2005). As a high-level mental activity, critical thinking develops the mind and the brain, since the brain is involved in complex mental processes, which by implication forces the brain to become cleverer. The reason for the teaching of critical thinking at schools is because it enables children to derive greater meaning from texts, make informed choices and formulate personal responses to social stimuli in an educated way. Thus, creating transferrable and applicable skills into other realms of an individual’s life, such as gathering and applying information found within the media.

The benefit of promoting and teaching critical thinking to students is to move them beyond the “what and how of things” and direct them as to why these concepts are important. This method would focus on the mind and a higher knowledge than the basic skills of reading and writing (Jeevanantham, 2005). As Jeevanantham has argued in his research on why teach critical thinking, knowledge changes rapidly and it serves no purpose to memorize a great deal of facts, which may already be obsolete when students complete their education. Instead greater transferrable life skills such as evaluation of facts should be taught for students to form and use their educated judgments in their decisions. Hence, critical thinking should be considered a socially beneficial skill for everyone especially the younger generation to accomplish in solving problems that are confronted by society as a basis or moral code for making logical decisions (Jeevanantham, 2005).
Creativity and intelligence are cognitive aspects that can be nurtured in childhood however, there has been a significant change in the mental health of students during the past decade. This change has been correlated with the increase in the number of students who now come from more socially and culturally diverse backgrounds (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). The reason for these changes are thought to be from the added stressors from the process of immigration that can lead to increased risk for emotional disturbance including traumatic experiences, death, and separation (Pumariega et al., 2005). As a result, the use of community-based mental health services and a community initiated by the education system of care approach is extremely valuable in addressing mental health needs of refugee children, adults, and their families (Pumariega et al., 2005).

As some of the key theorists of intelligence including Robert Sternberg, Howard Gardner, and Carol Dweck suggest, intelligences are not a fixed mindset and can grow and improve with hard work that involves the engagement of mental thinking and production. Gardner proposes that abilities are more isolated than theories portray them. Gardner has suggested eight identifiable forms of intelligence specified as, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, and bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (O'Donnell, 2013). Therefore, this means that students all have a starting point, but it is an educators’ duty to nurture this view for greater student success on how students perceive themselves to promote an incremental view of intelligence. This does not mean that an improvement in one area would result in an improvement in other departments at once. It is for learners to identify their strengths and work towards greater achievements using their abilities, which students are required to set individual goals for themselves (O'Donnell,
Researchers also have studied the contribution of critical thinking on English communication. The process of fostering critical thinking competence deals with stimulating students’ reverse thinking to engage their prior knowledge and enlightening their independent thinking capacity, then students may consciously apply their previously acquired knowledge into practice (Xu, 2013). This study then further delves into the necessity to teach critical understanding and adaptability before stepping into the labour market, which requires the capacity to become a critical and autonomous learner (Xu, 2013). As a result by combining the instructions for critical thinking and language instructions, there would be an increased chance for learners to develop both skills at a much more efficient pace.

Children tend to internalize ideas about the norms that are presented in the society whether as women, representative of a social status, and so on. They will then get used to the limited opportunities that they have, however, critical literacy moves them beyond a description of society and into interrogation of it (Christensen, 2000). Critical literacy is therefore an important skill to teach, since it equips students with the ability to read power relationships at the same time that imparts academic skills (Christensen, 2000). Teaching literacy is political act, since it is the “social blueprint” about what it means to be represented under different categories, such as men, women, poor, people of colour, gay, or straight (Christensen, 2000). It is also important to engage students in authentic tasks and critical dialogue that moves them beyond the curriculum content, since the falsely neutral curricula train students to observe things without judging as if the given society is fixed without any flaws (Christensen, 2000). This social literacy tool will then prepare students to face any act
of injustice or intolerance that they witness in their lives (Christensen, 2000).

Critical education movement however, has failed to develop a clear articulation of the need for its existence, its goals, priorities, or potentials (Giampapa, 2010). It also leaves a gap in how curriculum pedagogies in Canadian school prepare students for the challenges of the new economy and global world (Giampapa, 2010). Finally, it fails to address educational access for ELLs whose multilingual and multiliterate practices are not being pedagogically incorporated as fundamental sources to access academic literacies (Giampapa, 2010).

2.2.3 Creativity

A few centuries back adolescents were routinely engaged in real work as apprentices and employees, but modern society tends to keep young people disconnected from real work other low skilled service jobs that do little to nurture their thinking and problem-solving skills (Christensen, 2000). This approach restores a healthy connectedness to the adult workplace in ways that bring social issues to life while introducing the young to a richer view of career possibilities (Christensen, 2000). These social issues and career possibilities are studied, discussed, and analyzed in Social Studies courses such as psychology anthropology, politics, business, and the law.

Creativity in high demand and considered a priority for education in the 21st century learning style. It is essentially good for the society, education, economy, and individuals to develop a greater judgment and reasoning capacity (Aud Berggraf Saebø, McCammon, L. A., & O'Farrell, 2007). Since, creativity is essential to progress in knowledge societies, workers are highly demanded to have the skills to adapt to new work environments and tailor products in innovative ways to suit consumers’ needs, especially in societies that emphasize
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mass production and consumption of standardized goods, such as vehicles and electronics (Aud Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007). In another department, leaders in the public, private and social spheres are also required to respond to new strategic challenges, which are impossible without a creative mind and actions, such as creating schedules for spending the yearly budget (Aud Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007).

Traditional education is described with its emphasis on external factors, negligence of inner dispositions, and its carelessness towards child psychology (Collard & Looney, 2014). However, the recent demand and focus on creativity in education acknowledges these factors and encourages individuals’ desire for expression and identity using senses, imagination, thoughts and reasoning (Collard et al., 2014). In addition, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been a significant supporter of the mandates for schools to develop creativity in learners to prepare them for the unknown jobs that do not yet exist, technology that are yet to be invented and problems that have not yet been anticipated (Collard et al., 2014).

Rawat et all’s (2012) study on creativity and education has shown that creativity is primarily the knowledge of ideas, which is far beyond teaching students with a vast body of knowledge that is known to be beneficial at some point in their life (Rawat, Qazi & Hamid, 2012). Creative persons form judgments, convert facts to ideas and then elaborate on those ideas through their creative imagination. Therefore, successful learning would happen through the wake of senses with the freedom to act upon learning (Rawat et al., 2012). Rawat et all’s (2012) study has shown, creativity must be nurtured from childhood, which would essentially develop into problem solving competencies. As a result, education in
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earlier part of life should not consist of ideas that a child cannot understand; since reasoning would develop successfully when mental functions emerge from childhood experiences and continue on through adulthood (Rawat et al., 2012).

Problem solving is a skill that is developed through childhood experience, which ideally leads into the reflection phase. At this stage, the individual would look back and evaluate one’s actions (Rawat et al., 2012). To reflect on experiences and construct values and judgments is considered a skill, which connects learning to authentic real life experiences that results in an increased growth from within. However, reflection in a problem-solving situation is not a common practice, and is dependent on individual’s attitudes and personality towards issues (Rawat et al., 2012).

The suggested implications for practice of creatively teaching and teaching creativity in classrooms for teachers is to present education as a form of freedom. This idea would emerge through learning in different environments including, open interaction, use of senses through observation, hearing, hands-on activities, physical growth and movement, cognitive skill development through inquiry, and most importantly engaging their interest in self-initiated activities (Rawat et al., 2012). Furthermore, creativity is a state of mind in which all of our intelligences are working together to make our process of thinking innovative (Aud Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007). Hence, creative thinking is possible for all competences and intellects as it is a state of mind that needs to be nurtured. As a result, critical thinking is the in depth thinking process that takes place, which leads into creativity.

2.2.4 Classroom practices undertaken to teach ELLs in integrated courses

Researchers have done a study on collaborative teaching to increase ELLs’
knowledge on different content areas, which addressed the necessity of instructional programs adjustments to meet students’ needs (York-Barr & Ghere & Sommerness, 2007). This particular study emphasized the advantages of conducting lesson plans in elementary general education classrooms for ELLs by co-teaching to provide greater support (York-Barr et al., 2007). The teachers in the co-teaching study expressed their feelings of being more flexible and creative in their use of instructional time with better knowledge of students’ needs. This practice was believed to be very student-centered, since there was greater ownership of shared responsibilities by teachers and those particular students that resulted into greater overall academic achievements (York-Barr et al., 2007).

In another study on supporting English language learners in content-reading the author suggest that conversational English is much easier than the written form to master (Brown, 2007). Although both forms require the appropriate vocabulary to carry out meaning, it is a much easier process in conversations. This is due to the limitedness of conversational vocabulary compared to the academic language used in the written format. Aside from incomplete sentences, choppiness, filling-ins that are considered the norm in a conversation, extra-linguistic features such as facial expressions, intonations, or gestures are significant factors that provide cues to help in comprehending conversations (Brown, 2007). This method of teaching perhaps could be considered as a form of differentiated assessment, which ensures success for all students regardless of their language proficiency with a focus on real-life skills.

Moreover in a study gathered on ELLs in a Hong Kong university, researchers explicitly emphasized on certain strategies that really contributed to ELLs’ proficiency,
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which should be taught at a young age for students to master and transfer its use as a lifelong skill (Peacock & Ho, 2003). Strategies that these students highlighted include the relationship between previous knowledge and what is learned, finding patterns, compensation with the use of other terms or concepts to convey meaning, developing the initiative to take responsibility for one’s learning and ask for help as needed (Peacock et al., 2003). These strategies are all dependent on students’ motivation and attitudes in seeking higher knowledge. In addition, what is highly suggested by the researchers were that after the initial stage of language learning, the next step for teachers is to focus on social factors and other related concepts in order to be responsible members of the society (Peacock et al., 2003).

It is however, important to also realize that Social Studies subject curriculum does not recognize or represent the minority groups, or those who are considered as outsiders (Christensen, 2000). This includes, people with different social status, family backgrounds, education, and so on, who have limited if any representation in the popular culture that usually incorporates their stereotypes rather than their true beings (Christensen, 2000). This is not the end of it, since the whole social system seems to glorify one race, one culture, one social class, one gender, one language, without acknowledging the historical context that gave it dominance through means such as, museums, commercials, classes, and rules (Christensen, 2000).

2.3 Area of Thesis Contribution

This thesis will contribute and be a stepping-stone to the gap in the literature on inclusion of ELLs in Social Studies subject curriculum. It is also a relevant topic in culturally relevant pedagogy in Canadian education system.
2.3.1 The Visible Gap in Previous Studies and Current/Future Needs

There is a gap in the literature in covering the importance of ELLs’ inclusion in content areas specifically in Social Studies. Although there have been studies around the necessity of modified teaching in subject areas such as, language arts, mathematics, and science for ELLs, there has not been any specific study about the integration of Social Studies’ curriculum for ELLs. This is a content area where students learn how to think critically and “outside of the box”, which these students and their families are unaware of.

In addition, a significant difference between studying relative ELL teaching methods from both andragogy and pedagogical perspectives was that in gearing lessons toward adults, teachers must supplement and integrate authentic material that engages social factors. On the other hand, ELL youths are expected to learn these concepts by living among other classmates and are left to figure things out by themselves. The prospect stakeholders who will ultimately benefit from this study will be teachers, administrators and curriculum developers in being aware of the ELLs’ needs that could be achieved through modified instruction and inclusion in practice.

Language teaching should be focused on process rather than product, where students would essentially be monitored continuously and receive feedback in the form of prompts to assess their overall achievements rather than graded on a single task’s outcome. Ideal classrooms for all type of learners especially language learners should be student rather than teacher centered to activate the learning process. It would therefore be meaningless to assign random homework to keep students busy outside of classroom. Homework should only be mandatory to serve a purpose and should only be assigned to keep track of their
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Improvements throughout the course.

2.3.2 Culturally relevant pedagogy

Language learning upon immigration in a new environment is key to successful communication and the means to access higher education. This is a significant challenge that a lot of immigrant students face for a number of years before they feel at home with the new environment and develop native like language structures. This will be an ongoing process that teachers should take note of and be committed in creating a positive language learning experience for all of their students, especially their ELLs.

There has been a significant number of studies done on the need for preparation of teachers and effective classroom strategies and methods of instruction, but the effects caused as a result of the implementation and promotion of a positive respectable social environment for ELLs in particular have not been explicitly looked at in practice. Scholars and practitioners have argued that students who are learning English have been marginalized with respect to access to the curriculum, the achievement of the curriculum, and their social standing within the public schools (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). A principal theory of social justice within the education system is for a strong school leadership that would act as advocates in their school and community for the need of marginalized students, which happens to be the growing number of ELL population in our society (Theoharis et al., 2011). School leaders should also be representative of the community around them to have a deeper understanding of their needs and concerns. Thus, school leaders must take charge of ensuring equitable and inclusive education for ELLs that does not exclude them from gaining knowledge for not having enough language proficiency (Theoharis et al., 2011). As we look
further ahead within our society we would realize that immigrant youths from multicultural backgrounds will essentially makeup our future adults, whom therefore should be equipped with the knowledge and transferrable skills to contribute to society.

Teachers’ expectations from students should not differ if all students are well equipped to perform the expected tasks. It may be the case that some students may require more instruction or practice time, but that should be accepted if it allows children to perform at their best. Otherwise if children are excluded from performing certain tasks due to their pre-conceived inabilities, then they would be inhibited from mental growth and surpassing their current abilities. In short, English language learners would be capable to perform the expected tasks like writing with clarity or expressing themselves intelligently, articulately, and thoughtfully if they are taught those skills mindfully to help them achieve their academic goals (Cruz, 2014).

Social Studies curriculum matters not because it addresses current events and issues, rather it leaves the space and engagement of such discussions, which is build upon students’ analysis of facts and shaping of their own perspective. These discussions are important because the curriculum documents do not offer diverse world views that endorses systems of oppression, and other pieces of domination and subordination, including race, class, and gender (Collins, 1993). It is important to help students recognize that their different experiences with oppression create problems in the relationships among them and different communities (Collins, 1993). These new ways of thinking however, if are not accompanied by new ways of acting, offer incomplete prospects for change (Collins, 1993), and are best addressed in Social Studies classrooms. This is because thinking outside of the box or
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coming up with high-thinking questions about any social structure, is often not allowed and considered it as disrespectful in many cultures, which limits students engagement in the education system, and neglects the rights to be exposed to different perspective, if they are excluded from Social Studies curriculum.

2.4 Conclusion

Form the gathered data, I have come to the understanding that in responding to the needs of ELLs, teachers should allow for the space to recognize and value the quality and quantity of learners’ previous experiences in identifying themselves with the new language and culture. This thesis will promote that daily lesson plans and topics reflect the teaching and generate an authentic discussion associated with real life situations such as, political, social and judicial aspects of Canadian society to build on nurturing responsible citizens and building upon more of social advocacy in our schools, which would benefit all of our students. This method of teaching reinforces the concept of Communicative Language Teaching and student-centered learning.

Moreover, class environment would be pleasant and supportive to all students as it is required to be equal for all citizens regardless of their cultural beliefs, and language backgrounds. Through the implementation of such actions, students would feel safe in order to use their full capacity to learn new concepts and maintain a positive social image. The sense of being cared for and the thought that their participation matters, would lead students in creating realistic goals for themselves as autonomous learners outside of the classroom environment. Such an approach would also increase learners’ intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation and lead them in the direction of becoming self-learners. Such qualities are best
taught and nurtured in Social Studies class, where there is the time and space for larger topics that concerns the whole society.

Again, having experienced exclusion on content areas especially Social Studies, due to my limited language proficiency in elementary school, I believe that Social Studies instructions introduce new ways of thinking that children would miss out on if they are excluded from this topic. Teachers should rather promote the teaching of Social Studies to all learners without a bias through greater modification and accommodation of their ELLs. This is significant in terms of making student engagement meaningful so that they are integrated in a significant curriculum that addresses different perspectives and new ways of thinking. The English as a Second Language curriculum released by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), also emphasizes proficiency in English as being essential to students’ success in both their social and academic lives, and underscores the significance of engaging responsible and productive citizens (ESL & ELD curriculum, 2007).

Teachers’ expectations from students will be expected not to differ if all students are well equipped to perform the expected tasks. It may be the case that some students may require more instruction or practice time, but that should be accepted if it allows children to perform at their best. Otherwise if children are excluded from performing certain tasks due to their pre-conceived inabilities, then they would be inhibited from mental growth and surpassing their current abilities. In short, English language learners would be capable to perform the expected tasks like writing with clarity or expressing themselves intelligently, articulately, and thoughtfully if they are taught those skills mindfully to help them achieve their academic goals.
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As a result, the contribution of my study in this field would be used as a steppingstone for many other teachers and curriculum developers to recognize the importance of Social Studies instruction to ELLs and the gap in the studies that have previously been conducted on ELLs. This way more people in the related community including, teachers, administrators, and curriculum builders would become aware of the significance of why ELLs should be included in Social Studies instruction and the possible consequences that could appear as a result of lack of these instructions for ELLs that would essentially build up the future of Canada.
Chapter Three: Research Method

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to bring into light the importance of supporting ELLs in secondary Social Studies classroom, which would have an effect on how they would encounter the social justice system in their lives as fully responsible citizens. I will be drawing on characteristics of a qualitative case study in my research on my secondary school. The investigation will be conducted to examine the views and opinions of two Social Studies teachers’, and its future possible effects on the society. The data collection for this study will consist of two interviews from two teachers, who have experience-teaching ELLs to gain insights about their perceptions on the importance of teaching Social Studies content areas to ELLs. Further, this section will outline the research design, including a description of research participants, data collection and analysis, and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study will be conducted using a qualitative approach involving a literature review and semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators. Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive or theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the implications that individuals or groups of people associate with a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers use a qualitative approach to inquiry, meaning they collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study and analyze data based on patterns or themes. Moreover, the final report includes the voices of participants, the analysis of the researcher with a complex description of the problem and the study’s contribution to the literature.
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(Creswell, 2007). As a result, the way researchers write is a reflection of their own interpretations based on cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that they bring to research. Qualitative research commonly involves semi-structured interviews, which involve the study of a research site with permission that enables the easy collection of data in order to find individuals who can provide access to the research site and facilitate the collection of data (Creswell, 2007).

The strength of qualitative research is its ability in providing information about the “human” side of an issue, including behaviours, emotions, relationships, and beliefs of individuals contributing to the study (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research method for collecting data chosen in this study is in-depth interviews on individuals’ perspectives and experiences (Qualitative Research Methods). Some common characteristics of qualitative include the researcher as key instrument in collecting data such as interviews, observations, and documents and organizing it into categories or themes for further interpretation. These data are collected from a natural setting by talking directly to people and seeing them behave in their context (Creswell, 2007). As a result the researcher will start from thematizing the inquiry that they have gained, and design a study that stems from that particular interest or inquiry. The next step is to interview participants that may or may not have insights on the topic, in which the researcher must transcribe and analyze the data (Creswell, 2007).

As I have mentioned, I will be outline some characteristics of case study in my research by inquiring about descriptions of cases from my research participants (Creswell, 2007). The features of case study used in my approach are by repeating the same case study several times and comparing alternative descriptions or explanations of the same case from
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my participants (Creswell, 2007). These findings will then be presented by discussing the problem, the method, the findings, and the conclusion (Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Instrument of Data Collection

Interviews are crucial aspects of qualitative research. The use of interviews is very widespread, since anyone can interview and this hinders the complexity of interviewing. Well-conducted interviews are more than just conversations, since they involve assumptions and understandings about the situation, which are not normally associated with a casual conversation (Denscombe, 1983). The researcher will further make decisions on the sampling criteria and aspects including, events, settings, actors, and artifacts that would contribute to the final results of the study (Creswell, 2007).

The primary instrument for data collection used in this study is the semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to hear insights about participants’ lived experiences and general beliefs (Creswell, 2007). The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan an interview that contributes to their research focus and questions, while leaving leeway for participants to elaborate and even go beyond the content of the question and hint to unpredicted areas that the interviewer may not have been previously anticipating (Creswell, 2007). The most common form of semi-structured interview is the one to one variety, which involves the meeting between the researcher and one participant. Since it is easy to arrange, views are only expressed from one source, and the interview procedure is relatively easy to control (Denscombe, 1983).

The interviewer in semi-structured interviews has a clear list of issues on their agenda to address and need the answers to (Denscombe, 1983). However, semi-structured interviews
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allow the interviewer to be flexible in terms of the order of the topics discussed and questioned (Denscombe, 1983). Due to this flexibility and the nature of the open-ended questions, the space is given to the interviewee to elaborate points of interest. However, the interviewer should be aware of their time and the fact that they may not be able to cover all of their questions. Therefore, the interviewer must figure out what are the most important questions they need to get to by asking the right probing questions and bridging in between topics to move along the topics in question (Dickson-Kirsch, 2011). During the interview or immediately after, field notes are also taken by the interviewer to record their interpretations of what was said (Denscombe, 1983). Ultimately, the quality of instruments or the interview questions will equal to the equality of data and the research findings (Dickson-Kirsch, 2011). Therefore, semi-structured interviews a valuable instrument in this study for the degree of control exercised by the researcher over the nature of responses and the extent of the answers given by the respondents (Denscombe, 1983).

Data collection in this study will consist of semi-structured interviews for three different participants including two teachers and a current administrator with minimum five years of teaching experience. The interviews for each participant is about forty-five to sixty minutes long, at a location of their preferred choosing, which happened to be their Department Office. As previously mentioned, the participants did not receive the interview questions prior to the date to secure the authenticity and flow of the interview procedure. This way the participants are put at ease and it is be easier to generate probing questions from their responses. The interview questions consist of closed and open-ended questions. The purpose of the closed-ended questions is to acquire basic information such as teaching
background and work experience to put the participants at ease and start up the interview process. For example, their current teaching position, numbers of years in the field, and any other positions they have held in the field of education are asked at the beginning for the participant to feel comfortable responding to the rest of the questions (Appendix B). As Dong (2004) suggests, teachers often feel they do not possess adequate knowledge of ELLs’ learning needs and/or they possess false assumptions about their abilities, which is why they receive support in more privileged subject areas than social sciences. Therefore, this is to identify their level of comfort in satisfying ELLs’ needs. The purpose of the open-ended questions will be to learn about the experiences and beliefs that the participants have on the influence and effect of the instruction of Social Studies to ELLs. The questions are created in ways that is not offensive without any presumptions for participants to feel comfortable in sharing their insights. Some examples from the interview questions include the type of practices teachers are implementing, challenges that they are facing, their perception on the improvement of creativity and critical thinking skills in Social Studies subject areas (Appendix B). Research has shown that the methods used in teaching Social Studies are significant in teaching academic skills needed for research projects in the higher grades by being critical of the facts and biases (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005).

3.3 Participants

A closely interrelated step in the process of this study involves determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals that can best inform the study and the research problem under examination (Creswell, 2007). As studies suggest, a trademark of all good qualitative research is the report of multiple perspectives that range over the entire spectrum
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of perspectives.

Here I review the sampling criteria I established for recruitment of my participants. I have also included a section where I introduce each of the participants once I know who they are, but for the time being I have left this as a placeholder. The participants of this study consist of teachers who have at least five years of teaching experience. The study includes participant from both native and non-native English speakers. This ensures the quality and variety of responses. These ideal participants have qualifications in teaching Social Studies that is necessary for a greater insight in teaching these subject matters. They also have experience in teaching ELLs in their classrooms to contribute to the topic in question. Lastly, they have demonstrated leadership in extracurricular activities to share experiences from ELLs’ participation.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

Participants were chosen based on the following criteria including, minimum of 5 years experience teaching, active participants in teaching Social Studies content to ELLs, engagement in extracurricular activities that engages ELLs, and a variety between first language and second language learners.

1. Teachers with minimum of 5 years teaching experience working in Social Studies classrooms that includes ELLs

The rationale for this criterion is because I want the participants to have demonstrated a good understanding of the ELLs’ needs and requirements in their classrooms through their modification and accommodations to suit their needs. This is particularly important because these participants must have exercised different strategies and approaches to address the
needs of their ELLs and faced challenges that they have overcome in this process. The minimum of five years would have also allowed them to get a good grasp of the significance of their profession into the lives of their students especially the ELLs.

Having experience working with ELLs is especially important because teachers must have worked with ELLs in their classrooms to know about their needs. Due to the cultural backgrounds and norms that ELLs have been raised with, they may also require different kinds of attention that tend to come across when they have newly arrived to the new environment. Therefore, the kind of attention and care that is given to ELLs is very important at the early stages.

2. Qualifications and active experience in teaching Social Studies at the secondary level

The participants must have an AQ or background in teaching Social Studies themselves. The main reason for this criterion is because they would better understand the significance of this particular content area into the lives of their students and the special need for it for ELLs. The knowledge of Social Studies content, the strategies to teach it, and the challenges to modify lessons to suit all of their students’ needs is another significant factor in choosing participants for this study.

3. Participants have demonstrated leadership, commitment, and/or expertise in supporting ELLs in their classroom instructions

The reason for this criterion is because for the purpose of this research, I want the participants to have demonstrated some sort of a leadership outside of the classroom that may have played a significant role in the lives of ELLs. The general sense is that ELLs tend to show their abilities in other functions that do not require a lot of verbal communication. As a
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result this would have a significant effect on their social appearance and confidence level in dealing with the real world.

4. Native/Non-Native English Speaking Teachers

   My participants are chosen to include a combination of these categories. This criterion is chosen because I wanted to see the difference on practices and beliefs of teachers due to their personal backgrounds, and life experiences learning a different language. This could ultimately impact students’ learning, and the course content.

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures, Recruitment

   To recruit participants, I chose my secondary school that already has separated courses and classrooms for Social Studies content including geography and history for their ELLs. I had volunteered at this school for the past four years (2011-2015) and continued my assistance again from April until June of 2015. This connection has made me aware of the possibility of such a program and even the chances of it expanding to other subject areas under Social Studies and as an example for other schools considering the needs and benefits of such a program for their ELLs. I already have chosen two participants and they have agreed to participate in my study as well.

   Even if it was possible, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone in the community in order to get valid findings. The study’s research objectives determine which and how many people to select. The sampling method selected for this study is purposive sampling and the considerations on whom to select as participants or sites for study vary depending on the strategy and the size of the samples to be studied. The advantage of this method is that the researcher can select participants that purposefully inform an
understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007). Another advantage of the purposeful method is that it allows the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses by asking why or how. The researcher must listen carefully to what participants say, engage with them according to their individual personalities and use the right “probes” to encourage them to elaborate on their answers (Qualitative Research Methods).

The sampling size for this research however, is very limited as there will only be two participants. This limited size in qualitative research is provided to study a few sites or individuals and to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied (Creswell, 2007). This convenience would save time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility for its limitedness (Creswell, 2007).

3.3.3 Participant Bios

My first interviewee, Mr. Markus (pseudonym) has been teaching in this high school for sixteen years, and has never taught abroad. Mr. Markus has experience teaching Social Studies to Grades Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. His main teachable is Social Studies, and he has experience teaching the specialized ELL Social Studies courses, such as history and civics. Mr. Steve has also been a teacher with the board for 15 years, and has experience teaching abroad in Jamaica. His main teachable is also Social Studies, and has taught courses such as business, anthropology, Law, and history to Grades Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as well.

3.4 Data Analysis

The process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps
in the process. They are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis in this qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data in transcripts, which are then reduced to themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes that will be represented in different discussions (Creswell, 2007). Analyzing data through identification of themes is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research that gives meaning to the collected data (Bazeley, 2009). Qualitative research leaves that room for researchers to ‘learn by doing’ (Creswell, 2007); which is why there could also be some emergent themes through discussions with colleagues and professionals in the field, which can create awareness and prompt fresh ideas to pursue in this study (Saldana, 2008).

Data is managed and organized on computer files and converted into the programs that are easily located and accessed by me. Following the organization of the data, I read the transcripts in their entirety several times, and immersed myself in the details to get a sense of the views as a whole before breaking it into parts (Creswell, 2007). Next, I created detailed descriptions, developed themes and dimensions, and provided an interpretation in light of perspectives in the literature (Creswell, 2007). After that interpreted and analyzing the data, which involves making sense of it by abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2007).

As a researcher, I was aware of the future role that my research could play in the field, which drives my ambition to want to publish a document that could benefit other researchers, administrators and teachers in the field. I also respect and value this role in my career, to be able to contribute to the academia and future practices of teachers and administrators with a study that I strongly believe in.
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

The participants in this study did not receive the questions before the interview date, so that they are not reading from an answer sheet for a greater authenticity and transparency. Participants were also advised prior to the interview that they may refrain from answering any questions. Following the qualitative interviews, the data will be transcribed and strategically coded to highlight any significant trends and themes with field notes. Lastly, the data will be analyzed to complete the final chapter on findings of this study.

Prior to interviewing the teachers, all members were required to read and sign a consent form (Appendix A). The consent form will inform the participants about the purpose and procedure of the study, and the use of data gathered from the interviews. Participants knew they could refuse to participate and withdraw from the study during any point of the research. Participants were also aware that there are no known risks and benefits of their participation in the study (Appendix A). All copies of the consent forms as well as any other documents used for research purposes are stored in a password protected device for up to two years following the writing of my research paper, publication or presentation of my research findings. All documents will be safely destroyed after the completion of the study. Further, all participants mentioned in this study are given pseudonyms for confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, all raw data will only be accessible by the course instructors and myself.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

There are several limitations to this particular study. First, the sample size is small and will not be a fair representation within this particular area of study. Also a particular
limitation about the participants’ selection criteria is the assumptions that I have employed when creating those requirements that teachers who have five years experience in teaching Social Studies content to ELLs are best suited for this study. In addition, teachers’ views on the effects of Social Studies into ELLs’ lives cannot be measured the in long-term for most cases because they often lose touch with their students. Therefore, not having any student participants or classroom observations is another limitation to this study. Another limitation to this study was the use of participants from one site without any variations. Also, a significant limitation in this regard is that these findings from this particular site and participants can inform the topic but not generalize of teachers across the board.

Research suggests that the choice of having many sites and participants to observe and interview provides a broader outlook on the topic at hand and it does not overgeneralize the concepts developed because of it being widespread in the population (Baharein, 2008). Observations are also important because they would reduce the chances of any misconceptions or wrong interpretations taken by the researcher (Baharein, 2008). On the other hand, interviewing teachers directly provides the opportunity to hear about their beliefs and concerns in their own words that is more in-depth than a closed survey. Interviewing also creates the space for teachers and administrators to speak to what matters most to them regarding the topic in discussion. It also allows the participants to create meaning from their own lived experiences and contribute to the topic at hand by drawing on their practices and rationale for why they do the things they do in terms of pedagogical decision-making.

3.7 Conclusion

The methodology undertaken for this research study is a qualitative approach
consisting of a literature review and a semi-structured interview of two teachers and one administrator. The next step will be to interview the selected participants who would fulfill the criteria that I have outlined. These participants will be selected from a school that is already practicing a separate program to teach Social Studies to ELLs. All of these participants must sign a consent letter before being interviewed so that they are aware of the procedures and their rights in this research study. Some limitations to this study however are the small size of the sampling and the inability to conduct observation or interviews from actual ELLs in the classroom. Next, in chapter 4, I report the research findings.
Chapter Four: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will report the data collected from interviews in connection with the literature on the importance of inclusion ELLs in Social Studies curriculum to nurture a sense of responsible citizenship. The research conducted has characteristics drawn from case study and the findings reported inform a Participatory Action Research. This is meant to help secondary Social Studies teachers with identifying strategies to facilitate change, be more responsive to a community’s learning needs, and find realistic methods of instruction for implementation of the suggested strategies.

As mentioned in previous chapters, this research is conducted on a particular high school, which I have graduated from for my high school secondary level studies. I have experienced the program of study at first-hand by being placed in these particular ELL Social Studies courses as a new immigrant with limited English language proficiency at the time. While belonging to the same cultural community helped to reduce researcher effects, since I as the interviewer was seen as being less of an outsider, I was cognizant of the triangulation effects in my analysis as being more dependable when they are gathered from different sources in one community by offering different perspectives on a specific question or topic (O’Connor & Gibson, n.d.). Due to the triangulation effects from one particular community, there were both corroboration of findings that confirmed the same thought, which made them more valid and reliable, and also inconsistent or conflicting outcomes that led to more complex and context-respective explanations (O’Connor & Gibson, n.d.).

Data is systematically arranged into three major themes to answer the main research
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question including:

Theme 1: Program Details and Adjustments - focuses on the specifics of the modifications and instructional methods used for the special Social Studies program designed for ELLs at this particular school.

Theme 2: Nurturing Citizenship - Nurturing Citizenship addresses the concept of integration of ELLs into Canadian societal values.

Theme 3: Program Challenges – speaks to the outcomes and challenges it sets for both students and teachers.

The implications of this study are designed for the immigrant community, ELL/ Social Studies teachers, and school program developers. This study could also be used across wider communities and education board platforms with the increasing number of immigrants and refugees in the education system for its intent to engage transparency of the Canadian multicultural society in the secondary education system in developing responsible citizenship among students.

4.1 Program Details and Adjustments

The participants revealed that due to the school district, financial status, and its population demographics, its population has transformed from a multicultural mix of Middle Easterners, Asians, and a small mix of other cultures to mainly an Asian and Persian community, who are mainly identified as second language learners as well. These participants’ experience as teachers and involvement in the school community, which was over five years made them dependable sources with significant knowledge in the Social Studies department.
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The main reasons for the implementation of this program based on my participants’ beliefs were due to the significant number of immigrant population in the area who enrol at this school as ELLs, and require individualized attention in a mainstreamed classroom. This however, depends on the number of ELLs’ enrolment throughout each school year that speaks to the necessity of this program. As a result, mandatory Social Studies courses in Grades Nine and Ten, including careers, civics, history, and geography are offered separately for ELLs for levels one, two, three, and four due to these courses’ its heavy reliance on language. Ultimately as Mr. Markus mentions, classes are more manageable and the learning is far greater, when the numbers are smaller, since teachers get to spend more one-on-one time with students in need. Mr. Steve also believes that the structure at this school protects the Humans Rights of all students that is a great “social” theory to practice for the Social Studies learning of their ELLs. This is to enhance students’ confidence, and increase opportunities of success for all learners.

According to Vygotsky (1978), inner speech develops into verbal thinking through social transmission, which is why children learn best through effective and intellectual conversations. This leads to their learning as students, which is best achieved through cooperative learning tasks specifically designated for students’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that is the level at which students solve problems with sufficient support (O’Donnell, 2013). According to both participants, greater communication and engagement in the culture of the community improves language proficiency aside from their level. This also is inline with Chomsky’s (1960s) Language Acquisition Device (LAD) theory, which delivers, language develops through social interactions that are responsive and linguistically
complex (O'Donnell, 2013).

As mentioned previously, these meaningful tasks and conversations can only take place, when there are smaller numbers of students with approximately the same language abilities. This approach increases patience among teachers and students, since often ELLs’ comprehension level is not at the same level of their speech. This then seems to limit their intelligence, since they have to dumb down their thoughts so much that the meaning could be lost. As a result, the main purpose of this program with ELLs separated Social Studies courses is to embrace Canada as a multicultural society and Ontario’s education system as one that values individual differences and learning types, since it is teachers’ duty to address individual needs by having their best interests at the forefront of their personal pedagogy.

4.1.2 Program Adjustments

The aim of education system is to bring about success for all students by addressing their individual needs. The program designated at this school is intended to enhance the Social Studies learning of their ELLs due to the demographics of the region that has a wider range of immigrant population in the area. The subtopics in this section therefore, address the purpose of the program and the instructional methods that participants use specifically for ELLs.

Language learning upon immigration in a new environment is key to successful communication and the means to access higher education. This is a significant challenge that a lot of immigrant students face for a number of years before they feel at home with the new environment and develop native like language structures (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). This will be an ongoing process that teachers should take note of and be committed in creating a
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positive language learning experience for all of their students, especially their ELLs. Scholars and practitioners have argued that students who are learning English have been marginalized with respect to access to the curriculum, the achievement of the curriculum, and their social standing within the public schools (Theoharis et al., 2011). A principal theory of social justice within the education system is for a strong school leadership that would act as advocates in their school and community for the need of marginalized students, which happens to be the growing number of ELL population in our society (Theoharis et al., 2011). The study is therefore gathered to address how this particular school addresses the shortcomings of teaching curriculum to ELLs, which answers my subsidiary question on instructional methods and approaches that teachers take to respond to ELLs’ needs.

4.1.3 Instructional Methods

Authentic instructions are about making educational experiences as closely tied to real-life experiences. My participants revealed that successful instruction happens when teachers provide direct instruction followed by a meaningful task in which allows students to complete through creative thinking. As a result, once the students learn the task or skill, the educator would slowly reduce their support and limit their help to refinements, hints, or feedbacks (O'Donnell, 2013). This method encourages student-centered learning, and develops responsible learners. Both participants have agreed that at this school, support is provided for authentic assessment, multiple intelligences, gifted students, and of course ELLs. It is the teacher however, who drives the type of freedom and creativity demonstrated by students. Authentic instruction as outlined in the ministry curriculum documents, is all about extending skills beyond the classroom as lifelong skills that are to be used in future
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lives of these students, such as by collaboration in group-works to prepare for further education or used in the workforce.

To be explicit, authentic instruction in this school as they suggested, meant relating topics of instruction to students and the real world outside of the classroom, since students in high school are trying to fit in and figure out their place in the world. This sometimes becomes a burden on ELLs because aside from their language proficiency, they would also have to struggle with understanding a different set of social cues and behaviours. Bachman and Palmer (1996) have also suggested in their research that teachers responsible in dealing with ELLs should act as mediators in connecting the social sphere to the individual learners in classroom to help internalize language and gain confidence to develop their own voice within the new language from the social sphere (Phakiti, 2008).

The resources used for instruction include, textbooks, though Mr. Steve infers that he is not compelled to use them because they tend to be out-dated. As a result, their courses heavily rely on current research with information that is given to them on handouts. For the ELLs the information on these handouts has less of periphery information, but more of the information that is central to the understanding of the contents in discussion. Other resources include, the online Module system that tracks student activity on the website, which also relates to their perseverance in the course. Besides the normal classroom resources, these teachers also use Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that provides examples of instructional strategies that are best suited for certain individuals.

Although it is the duty of educators to address students’ individual needs, when there is a common language problem for a group of students, the participants were in agreement
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that a separate course for ELLs would serve their needs better. The common accommodations provided by teachers as mentioned by these participants were having a clear and explicit instruction with exemplars for assignments, glossaries and word banks, chunking content, providing reasonable due-dates for assignments with appropriate feedback, and extended time on tests and quizzes. There was however, a difference in practice and collaboration of these Social Studies teachers with the ELL Department at this school. Mr. Markus believes in continuous collaboration throughout the term between the two departments, since they would have a greater insight on these students in terms of their needs and abilities that helps in individualizing accommodations and instructional strategies to suit their needs.

Mr. Steve however, believes that although the ELL Department is present on the side to help with instructional strategies and awareness of their language level, the course instructors are ultimately the ones that are more aware of students’ performance and contribution in the classroom that does not always require consultation with the ELL Department. Research also suggests that collaboration between teachers is very student-centered, since there is greater ownership of shared responsibilities by teachers and those particular students that results in greater overall academic achievements (York-Barr et al., 2007).

Researchers have also indicated, successful instructional strategies for teachers when dealing with ELLs include, the relationship between previous knowledge and what is learned, finding patterns, compensation with the use of other terms or concepts to convey meaning, developing the initiative to take responsibility for one’s learning and ask for help as needed.
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(Peacock & Ho, 2003). These strategies however, are all dependent on students’ motivation and attitudes in seeking higher knowledge. In addition, what is highly suggested by researchers was to focus on social factors and other related concepts in order to promote responsible citizenship within each individual after their initial stages of language learning (Peacock et al., 2003).

4.1.4 Teacher’s Impact

Teachers’ attitudes and approaches in the way they teach and control their classroom setting can have a major impact on students’ learning. In order to provide the best help and support to students, teachers should be knowledgeable about their backgrounds and needs. This process could be a bit more complicated in high school because of the number of students that teachers are exposed to everyday. To help with the situation, the particular school in study’s Social Studies program for ELLs runs to ensure success for ELLs through individualized attention, and provides teachers with enough time to get familiar with their needs in order to tailor the delivery of the content to their accommodate their students’ learning needs.

In addition, offering clear choices to students encourages students to show their creativity in their responses as critical thinkers. This approach however, has been a difficult task to accomplish, since it is argued that teachers cannot equally hold the center ground because many still only refer to the facilitation of learning as their priority (Greener, 2015). This problem however could be solved through separate courses designated for ELLs, so they can prioritize their schedule based on the needs of their students, which could also help ease students’ transition and integration into the Canadian culture as well.
The ideology for this program confirms the Ontario Education Ministry’s main goal to link the content of the mainstream curriculum to the ESL/ELD program (Ministry of Ed., 2012). The ministry advises that it is better to provide differentiated instruction to groups of ELLs from the same grade or division rather than by level of proficiency in English. Also research has shown, the interaction among students of varying levels of language proficiency enhances language acquisition, which all correspond to the program at this school (Ministry of Ed., 2012).

Four major areas in which teachers must really prepare themselves to work with linguistically and culturally diverse students include, developing a sincere empathy toward ELLs’ language difficulties and cultural differences, developing an increased understanding of the process of language acquisition, achieving the skills to adapt the curriculum and instruction to suit their cultural and language needs, and integrating discipline specific language and literacy skills into area of instruction (Yu Ren Dong, 2004). The awareness of the students’ hardships in life and academic standing would help teachers tailor their instruction and classroom discourse to the students’ linguistic and cognitive development (Yu Ren Dong, 2004). Mr. Markus have also expressed the need to be sympathetic and understanding to ELLs’ ways of life that could have an impact in their lives on a deeper level, increases student/teacher respect, understanding, and opportunities for success. Mr. Steve also mentioned an event, when he went out with a group of his Persian students to watch a World Cup soccer-match broadcast to support their home country and make closer ties with his students. Based on my participant’s input about this program, it is observed that these courses are very empowering and they help build confidence in a community of like-
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minded people, which is a necessity for these students.

As mentioned previously, teachers’ attitudes and the way they relate to their students, leaves an impact on their education and personal lives. Both of my participants expressed that it was rewarding to witness students’ progression over the years as students in older grades or graduates when they come back for a visit. They observed these students with greater confidence, and able to overcome their academic challenges and even once again acted as mentors and references for these students’ future program of study or career choices.

Mr. Markus identified with ELLs closely because he understood the struggles and discriminations that his parents went through due to their language barriers, when his mom learned English as a French speaker, and his dad learned French on the military forces. He emphasizes, it is important to take the focus away from only having to improve grammatical skills for ELLs, and rather help them to make those transitions into the Canadian society a bit faster and easier. He mentions that he does this through the facilitation of learning, and being approachable for students to ask for help and engage student learning. This is because there has been a shift from strictly teaching content, to teaching specific skills that could apply to the real world outside of the classroom, which would also help minimize the discriminations that are faced by newcomers. Furthermore, he believes that Social Studies courses can be the best way for ELLs to improve their language proficiency because they involves language skills such as, reading, writing, and communication, which involve immersing themselves in both language and the culture of the new society.

Although Mr. Steve believes that these separated Social Studies courses increase ELLs’ confidence level, he expresses his personal belief as,
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“Um, from a professional standpoint, I, I, I, I’m not really it in favour of separating ELLs, as is common practice” (Steve, 2015).

He expresses that this experience is not very empowering for students, plus teachers are required to teach their whole demographics as suppose to only designate their lessons for a single purpose and need. He adds that he would rather see practices and procedures in place to empower all learners in the same environment. Mr. Steve further shares that there had also been instances where other social science courses such as business had been added to this program for ELLs as well, which he was not in favour of this idea especially for the elective courses. He explains, since these subjects are heavily language based, he would expect that a competent English speaking ELL would be enrolled in the course, and perhaps take these courses when they develop the competencies in higher grades.

In supporting Mr. Steve’s theory, research has shown that most ELLs spend significant portions of each day in the mainstream program (Ministry of Ed., 2012). As a result, integration is a key component of education today and even students who are new to Canada and/or new to English need to spend some part of each day interacting with their English speaking peers in mainstream classrooms. Effective instruction with content-specific subjects must include all learners especially when covering the Social Studies curriculum that includes an extensive number of topics such as history, world history, economics, and government (Thornton & Cruz, 2008). Even modest training to teach ELLs therefore, can make a significant difference in the classroom

4.2 Nurturing Citizenship

A citizen is by definition, one who possesses rights and corresponding obligations in society (Magsino & Long & Theberge, 2000). The rights and responsibilities in the Canadian
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Society are established for all citizens to enjoy and the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, which also supports full citizenship status for members of ethnocultural communities in the country (Magsino et al., 2000). To understand and appreciate the rights and obligations espoused in the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, it is important to study and examine them closely, which is the duty of teachers to educate their students on these matters. This section is divided into two major themes including, the importance of Social Studies subject matter and instructor effects. It is important to understand the purposes behind instruction of Social Studies because it is ultimately what shapes the Canadian societal values that these students will still be a part of in their future lives. The Instructor’s attitude towards the subject matter and his/her students can also have a major impact on the subject matter comprehension of their students. The purpose of this section is to address my subsidiary research questions on the importance of social science learning, what drives teachers’ interest in teaching these topics to ELLs, and the outcomes that they have observed from their students.

4.2.1 Importance of Social Studies Instruction

The main purpose of Social Studies as beautifully outlined by Mr. Steve is,

“Um ... it’s the course in critical thinking. It makes students ... or it should make the learner more connected to the social fabric of this community of Canada, so I think from that perspective that’s the main benefit” (Steve, 2015).

Both of my participants pointed out that the adjustments made to the curriculum to fit the need of ELLs is structured around a Human Rights issue that withdraws from an awareness of Canadian Constitution, Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and rights and
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obligations as Canadian citizens. The role of this content is therefore, to create self-awareness and build up avenues to access citizenship rights. The purpose is to highlight the Canadian identity, and suggests that these students should adapt to the Canadian identity. Mr. Steve further argues that through these instructions, students become more accepting of other cultures and races, and gain the tools needed to advance, progress, and live in a multicultural society. This is the ground, where students would develop an interest for politics and social issues on a global scale, which makes the instructions more meaningful and enlightens students of the life outside in the real world.

The reason for the teaching of critical thinking at schools is because it enables children to derive greater meaning from texts, make informed choices and formulate personal responses to social stimuli in an educated way. Thus, creating transferrable and applicable skills into other realms of an individual’s life, such as gathering and applying information found within the media (Jeevanantham, 2005). Though Mr. Steve values the importance of knowledge on Canadian Social Studies, he also believes that it is very career and interest driven that will not be present within each individual learner, whether ELLs or non-ELLs.

Researchers have studied the contribution of critical thinking on English communication, which deals with stimulating students’ reverse thinking to engage their prior knowledge and enlightening their independent thinking capacity that helps students consciously apply their previously acquired knowledge into practice (Xu, 2013). As concluded by researchers, through a combination of instructions for critical thinking and language learning, there would be an increased chance for learners to develop both skills at a much more efficient pace as is intended by the program in study as well (Xu, 2013).
Mr. Markus takes on the same view as this research that due nature of Social Studies content and its heavy reliance on language, it is more so important and necessary for ELLs to gain explicit instructions on this subject matter because it focuses on reading, writing, and communication skills. He also believes language allows newcomers to immerse themselves into the new culture because understanding the language is the first step into the new culture, which also speeds up the process of adaptation. He also believes that the study of Social Studies, politics, history, philosophy of a country is important for the younger generations because they are the ones that will ultimately put their footprints in the society by changing and shaping the values of that society.

It is important therefore, to study the past and learn from the mistakes and errors to avoid them from happening in the future. Social Studies, as the main subject focused on teaching social duties and responsible citizenship, plays an important role in allowing for a freedom of exploration around topics that challenge student thinking (Zemelman, 2005). This is because the skills and habits learned in Social Studies are to be transferred for lifelong responsible learning, which is significant for ELLs in order to build on their knowledge and promote self-esteem (Zemelman, 2005).

4.3 Program Challenges

As is common practice, there are benefits and challenges to any program initiated even for the purpose of helping out a certain group of students. In this section I will focus on the challenges and recommendations for teachers my subsidiary research question on this topic. This section will include the challenges of the school-initiated program faced by both teachers and ELLs.
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4.3.1 Challenges for Teachers & Possible Consequences for ELLs

The challenge to the school-initiated program as mentioned by Mr. Markus is that there has to be enough students enrolled in taking those designated courses for the ELLs to have their own specialized courses. Whereas Mr. Steve expressed that these courses are not empowering and there should rather be a program that educates teachers in developing skills to address the specific needs of each student, since ELLs are expected to develop their language proficiency to be prepared for their future choices in this society.

The challenges faced by ELLs in adjusting to the new society and education system are far too many, but some that were addressed by my participants were when teachers would do not make the unique accommodations for each learner. Due to their strong ELL Department and the support of the community who advocate and drive the agenda for the ELLs at this school however, they have this structure and program set up that protects the Human Rights of all of their students. Another challenge that is faced by ELLs is fitting into the system and also being accepted and understood by peers.

Research has shown, upon reaching adequate language proficiency, ELLs experience fewer academic disadvantages, which increases student achievement levels for these newcomers who will eventually make up half of the student population in North America (Ardasheva, Tretter & Kinny, 2012). Bilinguals are often associated with having certain cognitive advantages including, problem solving, better functioning of abstract representation, and attention control, which has been often thought otherwise by teachers (Ardasheva et al., 2012). The authors however conclude that there is a gap in studies on the achievement level of former ELLs who exited this status and no longer receive any language
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support to confirm their long-term progress (Ardasheva et al., 2012).

It is informed by the Ministry of Education that it takes up to five or more years for ELLs to develop their language and literacy skills (Ministry of Ed., 2012). The data on newcomer ELLs also suggest that immigrant children eventually outperform their Canadian-born peers, which is a surprise to many teachers (OECD, 2006). As a result with the growing number of immigrant population, the training and skills for teachers to develop the patience and strategies in working with ELLs is crucial.

4.4 Conclusion

Learning a new language involves merging oneself into a new culture. Culture, traditions, historical backgrounds, and geographical locations are topics that are discussed in Social Studies courses. It is therefore, a heavy duty for teachers to teach ELLs along with other students in their classroom because it involves the facilitation of acquiring the language and responsible citizenship as required by the curriculum guidelines. Improved literacy on language and the society can contribute to economic growth, reduce poverty and crime, promote democracy and enhance cultural diversity, increase civic engagement, and empower learners by providing increased self-esteem and confidence.

This study involved a complicated and challenging process to narrow down the research on these topics, since there were not any previous studies around this issue. A significant strength to the study however, was the privilege to engage multiple educators from the same program, which improved my standpoint in my research area. This also helped me provide a deeper understanding to justify the answers to all of my research questions including, instructional strategies, challenges faced by teachers and ELLs, importance of
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content and the factors supporting these teachers to educate ELLs about the content.

In order to provide an equity and inclusive education, teachers are required to commit to a shared leadership between teachers and students. To fulfill this, classroom instructions are to be directed using inquiry-based learning that is co-constructs knowledge, rather than problem-based learning, which positions the educator as the holder of knowledge. In this environment, the teacher will be a co-learner and a facilitator rather than an expert on topics. As such, teachers will accomplish best if they strive to create a classroom environment, where students feel comfortable enough with the teacher and with their peers, so that they are willing to take risks and share their opinion. This would increase student success in actively taking ownership, and responsibility for their learning.
Chapter Five: Discussions

5.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the research project as a whole. Next, a summary of key research findings will be reviewed and briefly discussed. Furthermore, this chapter builds on the findings as presented in the previous chapters. A discussion around research implications, recommendations and areas for further research will follow and will constitute this final chapter.

5.1 Study Overview

As an immigrant student in Canada, I have personally experienced privilege, power, and been marginalized in ways in which, have shaped my understanding of the world and the education system in Ontario. When I first started school here in Toronto, I had no academic background knowledge on race, privileges, tolerance on differences, or discrimination, and was never taught to deal with systematic racism, rather just situated in circumstances that I had to experience it at first hand. During the first few years of my schooling in Toronto I was often looked at as incompetent in different subject matters due to my limited language proficiency at the time having to deal with learning the content and the new language all by myself without the aid of any teachers. It was also generally easier for me to make friends with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures rather than the White dominant group, since I was afraid of not being accepted by them due to my cultural upbringings, appearance, belief system, experiences, and obvious foreigner accent at the time.

As a result, having to start out as an ELL myself with limited opportunities to pursue studies in social sciences, I was always cognizant of this limitation, consequences, and
impacts it could lay on the next generation of immigrants. It was not until my high school experience that I was given the opportunity to take courses from Social Studies Department, which was specifically designed for ELLs including, history, civics, and careers. This is the main reason that drove my interest in pursuing a case study on my Secondary School with the main research question as,

_How is a small sample of social science teachers modifying their instruction to support the social science learning of their ELLs in nurturing responsible Canadian citizens, and what outcomes do they observe from these students?

This research led to my understanding of different instructional strategies that could be very effective in terms of content delivery for greater student success for ELLs. Another significant factor was the impact of the Social Studies courses and instruction in students’ lives and in terms of understanding the world around them. The delivery of content and students’ understanding could also be very dependant of teachers’ attitudes and belief system. I also understood that culturally responsive pedagogy is not similar across the board and it could vary school by school based on the population that attends that particular school.

### 5.2 Overview of Key Findings

This qualitative research project relied on the data that was derived from conducting semi-structured interviews with two Ontario educators as a strategy to answer the main research question mentioned above, and the following subsidiary questions:

2. What are some of the specific challenges related to social science subject matter comprehension these teachers have observed from their ELL students?
3. What instructional strategies and approaches do these teachers enact with their ELL students to respond to those challenges?
4. What factors encourage these teachers’ interest and efforts to support the social science learning of ELLs?
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5. What range of outcomes have these teachers observed from their students? What indicators of learning do they see?
6. From their perspective, what is the importance of Social Studies instruction to ELLs?

While sharing similar characteristics and experiences with my participants in this cultural community for having received my secondary education at the same school, I was aware of the triangulation effects in analyzing the data gathered as being more dependable from different sources with different perspectives in the particular community. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in order to uncover the common recurring themes. In chapter four the studied Program Adjustments, Nurturing Citizenship, and Program Challenges are discussed in great length. This final chapter will focus on discussing the implications of these findings, along with recommendations and suggestions for further research in this area. These key findings included broad and narrow implications for the educational community.

5.3 Implications

Numerous key findings were determined through the process of analyzing the themes in chapter 4 and comparing and contrasting the data to the literature. These findings are discussed under Broad Implications and Narrow Implications. Under Broad Implications, research findings are discussed as relevant to the greater education community and society as a whole. In the Narrow Implications, findings are discussed, as they are relevant to teaching practice and preferred instructional strategies.

5.3.1 Broad Implications

The broad implications of findings for the educational research community from this research question are for teachers, teacher training programs and courses. Social Science
teachers should have a solid understanding of the history of the country’s existence, and the current world issues. They should encourage the belief system and demystify history as something that happened in the past and study its impacts on the current disputes, so that more people are aware of the past, so that the same mistakes are not repeated again. Since teaching is the number one profession that contributes to our society, they should constantly update their knowledge through professional development courses or sessions, and use current resources to teach their lessons. By practicing current methods and resources, we would also nurture critical thinking and curiosity to the outside world in our students. It is therefore, important to nurture intelligence among our student population, and realize that it is not a fixed mindset, as they grow and improve with added knowledge.

Learning a new language however, involves the merge into the culture, traditions, historical backgrounds, and geographical locations, which are taught in Social Studies. According to literature and my participants’ experiences, these skills and knowledge can be better achieved through the integration of literacy into different subject curriculums to ensure greater understanding of the concepts in discussion. It is important to note that literacy involves the three skills of writing, reading, and communicating, which teachers need to be aware that it is really easy to integrate such skills in other subject curriculums, such as math, health, science, Social Studies and so on.

Educators should pursue the problem-solving model, instead of the banking model of education (Freire, 1997), which sees children as empty vessels without useful prior knowledge. This model requires educators to constantly be aware and reflect on their own social standing, knowledge of different topics that reflexes from students’ perception when
engaging in conversations, and their belief system. When students are not seen as passive vessels, they would be far more encouraged to show their creativity in their responses as critical thinkers. This is because critical thinking develops the mind and the brain, which is an important skill to be taught at school, since it enables children to develop greater meaning from texts, make informed choices, and formulate personal responses to social phenomena in an educated way. This would create transferrable and applicable skills into concrete knowledge in individuals’ lives. The benefit of promoting and teaching critical thinking to students is to move them beyond the “what and how of things” and direct them as to why these concepts are important. This method would focus on the mind and a higher knowledge than the basic skills of reading and writing.

According to Miller, 2010, and my participants, quantitative literacy is also another important proficiency, which specifically relates to “word problems” from science, history, and other fields. Unfortunately, teaching how to solve such problems is often downgraded to math courses alone. Quantitative literacy that involves writing out hypotheses, provides a deeper understanding of the concepts through interpretation of the results in disciplines such as science, social science, or health that discuss tangible topics (Miller, 2010). According to literature and interviewees, teaching subjects such as English and Social Studies should involve written work, observations, discussions, and debates, which is essential to students’ successful learning. This is to suggest that ELLs should not be excluded from classwork because they are less proficient in the language, since they can still formulate answers from prior knowledge, but may need extra support with expressing their thoughts. Student success is achieved when teachers’ standards are high for everyone and the learning is facilitated.
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through students’ differentiated needs. These instructional methods also incorporate the problem of language learners, which encompass successful cognitive development through a dialectical relationship between the individual child and the social context in which they develop. Cognitive development is further enhanced through a student-centered environment, where scaffolding takes place. In this process children are taught and encouraged to use problem-solving skills, accomplishing tasks, and achieving their higher goals. By accomplishing these tasks, educators would also be covering the English as a Second Language curriculum’s guideline, which emphasizes proficiency in English as an essential component to students’ success in both social and academic lives of the students, and stresses the significance of engaging responsible and productive citizens (ESL & ELD curriculum, 2007).

According to my participants, the most motivating things teachers can do for their ELLs is to provide opportunities for them to see the immediate connections between their lives and the curriculum, which is an important component for success. Authentic activities can include a variety of presentation formats that connect a work of literature, a poem, a quote, a piece of art, or song lyrics to the students' lives in the new residing country or their past experiences in their native countries.

Moreover, assessment of ELLs in mainstream classrooms, like planning for instruction, requires additional time and collaboration on the part of teachers, but the benefits that students and teachers reap from such work are numerous. Teachers gain accurate and nuanced understandings of their ELLs' understanding, interests, and abilities. ELLs gain valuable information about themselves as learners and their understanding of concepts under
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investigation becomes deeper and lasting, since it is connected to their skills, interests, abilities, and lives outside the classroom. In addition, their confidence and language abilities are greatly enhanced. Mainstream students benefit from a variety of assessment measures as well, and these form a differentiated assessment protocol that enriches all students' experiences and interest in the curriculum. Finally, the community that is formed in the classroom through the completion of collaborative projects, peer feedback, and increased, authentic interaction is valuable for all involved.

When content teachers include performance-based, non-traditional assessments for ELLs as a supplement to the traditional assessments, a clearer picture of the ELLs emerges and allows teachers to develop learning experiences that meet their diverse needs. In addition, ELLs are more likely to develop real knowledge surrounding the topics under investigation in the classroom through the use of authentic assessments. This method would increase ELLs’ knowledge and confidence on the content, and enhance their performance on the necessary traditional assessments, which would be a win-win situation for all involved.

5.3.2 Narrow Implications

Ever since my arrival in Canada, my family and I experienced the myth of meritocracy which portrays that this is not such a free country, since many doors and opportunities are open for certain people through no qualifications of their own. These privileges as McIntosh (1988) address are like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, and unearned asset that neglects people as human beings with equal rights, and undermines the credibility of others due to the difference in the skin colour, religion, cultural practices, or language proficiency.
Through the myth of meritocracy, I also got familiar with White privilege, which is a form of racism that puts people with different skin colours, language, race, and culture as second-class citizens. I experienced these behaviours towards me in the education system, government agencies, and even when crossing the U.S. border. I felt like I was being ‘othered’ and disadvantaged due to my Middle Eastern descent. These treatments however, wore off as I became more fluent in the language with less of an outsider accent, but my parents would still sometimes experience the same kind of treatments, which frustrates me deep inside. I can personally finally relate to the experience of feeling welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, whether institutional or social, which I would like to think I have earned with my education in this society, and not by the colour of my skin or practices.

It is however, unfortunate to know that our education system is a reflection of privileged educators’ belief system that teach students to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by the privileged race, and never in invisible systems and the basis, where those groups have gained their racial dominance over the others (McIntosh, 1988). Having been educated in this society and used to the system, I have been taught the same kind of systematic values and belief system even though I often associate with people from diverse backgrounds. I also did not realize that being White comes with an extensive overload of responsibilities that should hold one accountable as a holder of those privileges. This is relevant in terms of teaching Social Studies especially to ELLs, who are not familiar with the systematic discriminations that exist within this society. They have no other way of finding out about it until they face it later in their lifetime without any preparation or any means of
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dealing with it.

This goes to show that Solomon’s, 2009 claim about those who work hard will be rewarded in an assumed meritocratic opportunity structure and able to influence to reproduce the racial order in the next generation of Canadians, is flawed. Since, even with greater education, there are still no equal opportunities among different races in any field of education or career, which is why it is absolutely crucial to teach these social structures and phenomena to all students regardless of the language proficiency, in order to familiarize them with authentic information that would become useful in their future lives.

Equal opportunities and positions of dominance are not easily achievable by people of colour, while denying that systems of dominance exist to this day. This is very evident among Canadian teachers, who continue to be overwhelmingly from White female and middle-class (Solomon, 2008). This issue should call for an urgent need of a radically progressive preparation of beginning teachers who will be facing a racialized environment in their future classrooms. This will be a challenging task, since teacher education alone cannot reverse racial formation, which leads to increased privilege behaviours in schools and the communities they serve. As a result, the attitudes and beliefs these teachers hold personally would become evident and nurtured in their teaching about the racial other. The norms then justify White people’s social and economic advantages that are mainly gained as a result of subordinating diverse others. These information will be accessed nowhere in the curriculum, except for contents in diverse social science courses in high school.

The problem with the Canadian education system is that many teachers and teacher candidates lack historical knowledge of race relations within a Canadian context (McIntosh,
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1988). This is because we mainly tend to focus on people’s oppression on issues such as, gender and class, rather than racial discrimination (McIntosh, 1988). Teachers then tend to replicate dominant ideology regarding race and practices of racialization because they too have been educated and socialized in the same system as their White colleagues (McIntosh, 1988). The points that separate our value system from Americans however, are race-based policies such as, multiculturalism and antiracism, which provide a platform for teachers to create the basis for the dialogues and the culture of the school environment (McIntosh, 1988).

Based on my research and experience gained during my practicum placements in working with ELLs, I will uphold and inclusive environment in my classroom, where everyone with different abilities would feel welcomed and appreciated. I would involve students in performance assessment tasks to provide that authentic classroom experience, and offer students with different opportunities to show and practice knowledge in non-language-dependent ways through Venn diagrams, charts, drawings, mind maps, or presentation slides. I will also promote participation in nonthreatening situations that encourage experimentation with the target language of study, and assess language learning and content knowledge in the participation activities.

Well-developed tasks for performance-based assessments for ELLs should accomplish a useful meaning that is relevant to their everyday lives by supporting their language and cognitive needs. Teachers should also be flexible in meeting individual needs through the use of criterion-referenced assessment for judging students’ work. Students should also be provided with constant feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. These methods will ultimately provide the teacher with extensive descriptive information that
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can guide their instruction as well. These methods will be best used in schools that are already invested in culturally responsive pedagogy.

I strongly believe in integration of literacy in different subject curriculums, which is what I have practiced during my practicum placements as well that has been very beneficial both in terms of content delivery, and student success in learning the content. The methods I had used were creating a word wall with pictures that was beneficial for both my ELLs and native speakers for having a visualization that goes with new words being discussed in classroom. I also used literacy circles that involved the three skills of reading, writing, and communicating with one another to enhance their understanding of the content material. In math, I designed a bansho assignment for students to explain their thought process and ways of solving their equations. I also integrated a health unit on bullying and stress management with literacy by teaching poem analysis on those topics. Lastly, I integrated literacy in visual arts by providing students with the meanings behind colours and designs for creating indigenous tribe masks, in which they had to design their masks and then write a description for it as if it were to be displayed in a museum explaining why they had chosen the colours and the designs for their masks.

5.4 Recommendations

Although I have acquired some knowledge about the range of observed outcomes and indicators of learning of the Social Studies content, I would suggest it as a topic for future research and development. My participants have shared the view that the education system has made progress from the past for requiring teachers to take opportunities and address individual needs, which stems from a given right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and
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 Freedoms. Teachers should understand their student demographics needs and struggles rather than try to be understood by them or take the top-down approach. This would make education more meaningful to children and will leave a bigger and deeper impact on their lives. Other suggested advice for beginning teachers were in further educating themselves on the curriculum and being aware of what it means to offer authentic assessment, be engaged around the literature on Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2006) and different learning styles, and how to incorporate technology in their pedagogy.

 Teacher education should also move towards providing instructions on linguistically responsive teacher education, since it is important to know that conversational language proficiency develops faster than academic language proficiency. It is also important to note that students perform differently based on their native language proficiency, but a safe environment with minimal anxiety on ELLs’ performance level will result in higher achievement for these students. Teachers should therefore develop their understanding of ELLs’ diverse backgrounds, challenges and difficulties, and their strengths through professional development before they can actually make necessary changes to the curriculum by using the appropriate resources. Educating teachers about supporting ELLs would also enhance the Canadian identity from the perspective that these immigrant students are the ones who have to ultimately teach their parents about the Canadian society. Since parents often make the move to these Western societies so that children are better educated, but do not often have the time or money to further educate themselves about the Canadian Social System (McIntosh, 1988). It is therefore the responsibility of their children to share their knowledge that could impact the society at large. The regain of critical pedagogy could also
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be further studied in teacher education and also in content development.

As a result, the change should take place within teacher education programs by allowing discussions that distinguishes between advantages and consequences of human differences including, age, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, physical ability, which unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchy. These programs should also provide an environment, where teachers from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to develop professional competencies in different settings, including urban schools. Also, the integration of the issue of equity into the curriculum and pedagogy should be addressed, and there should be a greater collaboration among the candidates, teachers, and teacher educators.

As a final thought, I believe that the teacher population at a school should reflect the community that it represents to respect and value the differences in different neighbourhoods.

It is recommended that teachers promote a safe space for students to share their ideas and use teachers’ knowledge as facilitators. Teachers should not be required to possess all types of knowledge, rather be resourceful in terms of connecting students to the right resources. In order to do this, teachers should engage in continuous professional development through workshops, and Additional Qualification courses to have a better understanding of students’ needs and promote innovative education. This type of education is by having teachers connect the curriculum to current issue to get students interested, then step-down from their position as teachers and guide students through their inquires. This method would encourage students to take risks, and strive to accomplish their goals. It is through these innovative methods that teachers would foster and instil learning in their students as lifelong learners.
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5.5 Areas for Further Research

In the past many provinces provided exempt status from high-stakes content assessments for ELLs who had been in school for less than three years and had not yet achieved a determined level of proficiency in English. However, while these tests have increased accountability in terms of teaching ELLs, content programs are often still developed without proper consideration of the needs of ELLs. This creates a situation where the exams may not be giving accurate information about the performance of ELLs, since they face the challenge of simultaneous second language acquisition and content knowledge development. This is perhaps why it is hard to distinguish whether a wrong answer is a result of unfamiliarity with the test format or trouble understanding a word in the directions. Furthermore, background knowledge and past educational experiences also play a role in how ELLs perform on standardized assessments. As a result, I recommend that further studies should research the credibility of standardized tests on ELLs’ performance levels based on their language proficiency and content knowledge as two separate entities rather than their cultural and content knowledge. Since when combining the two together, it becomes a difficult task to assess these tests and makes the information provided by these assessments unreliable.

5.6 Concluding Comments

The literature and participants’ views discussed in this research, point out to understanding the society that we live in, its institutions, the world and how we relate to each other, the oppression faced by people in this society to help us work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive.
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This will be a step away from finding a commonality in the experience of difference without compromising its distinctive realities and effects. Since, it takes the individual out of the context and reinvents the struggles and differences that people face on a continuous basis.

It is therefore significantly important to know about the laws and history of one’s land. It is critical for newcomers to know that reverse racism does not exist, meaning that there are people that hold certain privileges in every society. Certainly and unfortunately it does not only depend on us educators to nurture matter responsible citizens, rather it is the mindset of people that needs to be changed. Our job however, is to disrupt the unacceptable norms with new research and ideas. This is done by taking actions, passing on words, and accepting differences among the constant changing society.

As a result, this is a collective responsibility of everyone and anyone in the education system to educate these students in the best shape and form they can without relying solely on the ESL teachers, since addressing students’ differentiated needs is the main responsibility of all educators. This will ultimately generate a ground in the society to reduce racism, since it is not only one group’s problem, but everybody else’s as well. Building a community therefore, is everybody’s responsibility as well, and education is the first step to human rights, which is fundamental to human dignity. By normalizing differences in our classrooms, we can also share the responsibility with our students to pass on to their communities.

Finally, improved literacy can contribute to economic growth, reduce poverty, reduce crime, promote democracy, increase civic engagement, enhance cultural diversity and confer human benefits, such as increased self-esteem, confidence and empowerment. In teaching literacy, it is also important to recognize culture and language as embedded concepts, which
need to be brought together for a greater understanding. The subject curriculums however, embrace the need to leave students’ diverse cultures and languages behind in order to succeed. However, understanding students’ background cultures, family relations, needs and desires, could help in designing classroom instructions by integrating those ideas into the curriculum. This would ensure that the classroom teaching is not reinforcing the societal power struggles, rather is designed to address the needs of that community in particular that could be changing every year. The benefits of literacy ensue only when broader rights and development frameworks are in place and operating effectively.
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Appendices

Appendix A – Consent Form

Date:

Dear,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying how high school educators are supporting the social science education of ELLs for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor and research supervisor who is providing support for the process this year is Eloise Tan. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45-60 minute interview that will be audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Parastou Ziadlou
parastou.ziadlou@mail.utoronto.ca
Instructor’s Name: Eloise Tan
Email: eloise.tan@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Parastou Ziadlou and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________________

Name (printed): _________________________________

Date: ____________________________
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Appendix B – Interview Protocol

Introductory Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The aim of this research is to learn the importance of instruction to ELLs. The Interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes. I’d like to also remind you that you may refrain from answering any question as we proceed. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Teacher’s Background

1. What grades and subjects do you teach? Have you taught?
2. How long have you been a teacher? Have you ever taught abroad?
3. Do you have experience teaching English Language Learners?
4. Was social science a teachable for you in teacher’s college?
5. Can you tell me about your current school and students (size, demographics, languages spoken, nationalities, program priorities)?
6. What personal, professional, and educational experiences informed your interest and commitment to supporting ELLs, and prepared you for this work?
7. Approximately how many ELLs do you have in your ELL cohort OR mainstream classroom?
8. In your school, are ELLs separated from the general classroom during lessons?
   a. Sub: For which courses are they separated?
   b. Sub: Why these courses in particular?
   c. Sub: Do you wish to extend this option for other courses in like law, world issues, business and etc.? Why/why not?

Teacher Beliefs

9. What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges ELLs face in school?
10. In your opinion, how well do schools respond to these challenges and why?
11. In your opinion, what are some key characteristics of ELL support programming?
12. What are some of the limitations with regard to how ELLs have traditionally been supported in schools?
13. In your view, what is the purpose of social science education?
14. Do you believe that there can be a change of attitude and awareness of Canadian laws or values among the students who have taken courses? Can you give examples?
16. Does the knowledge and awareness of Canadian values and beliefs have any effect on these students’ socialization with other peers?
17. Does the instruction of provide the opportunity for students’ creativity and innovation in an authentic way that they can apply to the real world?
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Educational Practices

18. What are the learning goals, instructional strategies, and assessment practices that you associate with social science education?
   a. Sub: What opportunities of learning do you create and how did your students respond?
   b. Sub: What indicators of learning did you observe?
   c. Sub: How, if at all, do you provide accommodation or modifications for ELLs?
   d. Sub: What resources do you use to support you?
   e. Sub: In your experience, what is ELLs’ learning interests in the social science courses?

Supports and Challenges

19. In what ways, if any, do you think these goals, practices, and strategies pose particular challenges in terms of meeting the learning needs of ELLs?
   a. Sub: Subject matter comprehension?
20. What kind of feedback have you had from people outside the classroom regarding your practice of teaching to ELLs?
21. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to supporting the social science subject knowledge of ELLs?
22. What goals do you have for future teachings of to ELLs?

Thank you for your time and participation.