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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FACING ELLS IN ONTARIO'S MULTILINGUAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FACING ELLS IN ONTARIO'S MULTILINGUAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Given the multicultural, multilingual nature of classrooms in Ontario, English language learners (ELLs) experience challenges while studying English-medium literacy material in mainstream English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to observe the reading comprehension performances of ELLs, given the objectives of English elementary curriculum (EEC) (Ministry of Education, Ontario/ MEO, 2006). Students from grades 5 and 6 in a public school in southwestern Ontario participated in the study. The researcher investigated the challenges three ELLs experienced when faced with English medium literacy material and the reasons for these challenges. Also, the application of different learning strategies in mainstream ELA classrooms was investigated.

Questionnaires, observations, and interviews were used to collect data. A combination of two approaches, case study descriptions and cross-case analysis, was used to analyze the data. The findings suggest that ELLs face some challenges in comprehending some topics and ideas presented in English-literacy material. The negative approach of ELLs towards learning activities and unfamiliar cultural backgrounds of English-literacy material are among the major challenges. Thus, their parents and teachers need to help ELLs learn to use suitable learning strategies to overcome these challenges. Finally, this research suggests that it is useful to examine the experiences of ELA teachers and ELLs in order to identify and improve these students' English reading comprehension achievements.

Key words: ELLs; English-medium literacy material; cultural capital; reading comprehension; learning strategies; English Language Arts

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1. Introduction to the Study

1.1. Introduction

The purpose of the study was to observe the reading comprehension achievements of English language learners (ELLs)[1] in Grade 5 and 6 mainstream English classrooms, given the objectives of the English elementary curriculum (EEC) set by the Ministry of Education of Ontario (MEO) (2006) for ELLs. It also studied the challenges ELLs experience while comprehending and responding to English medium literacy material. In addition, it investigated the role of learning strategies, including Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) strategies in increasing ELLs' abilities to overcome these challenges and to comprehend English medium literacy material in mainstream English reading classrooms.

This was a qualitative research project – a descriptive case study – that took place in a reading classroom in a public school located in southwestern Ontario, Canada. Data were collected between November 2008 and February 2009 in English Language Arts (ELA)[2] classes. The level of English language skills of ELLs, determined by their teacher, served as a way of locating three student participants: one high(er) achieving and the other two low(er) achieving students in an ELA class.

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[1] "English language learners are students in English-language schools, whose first language is other than English" (MEO, 2005, p.48).

[2] The term 'English Language Arts' (ELA) is applied for the term 'Language Arts' (LA) (MEO, 2006) to make the LA term comprehensible for those readers who are not familiar with the North American education pattern.

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was given to the student participants to find out details about their social, cultural, linguistic and academic backgrounds. Then, English reading classes were observed to analyze the teacher's teaching methods, the student participants' comprehension skills and their application of learning strategies. Later on, teacher and student interviews explored the issues related to the challenges the student participants faced while comprehending reading units, the learning strategies they applied to overcome these challenges, and the reading objectives (MEO, 2006) they achieved in English reading in an ELA classroom.

1.1.1. Background of the study

Given the multicultural nature of Ontario and the emergence of changing trends in the tradition of teaching English, like postmodern deconstructionism (Slattery, 2006) and multiculturalism (Kristen, 2008), the task of analyzing English teaching has become a complex and multi-faceted issue. To explain this fact, Don Gutteridge (1994) has outlined different shifts in the tradition of teaching English in Ontario since 1960 that evolved in reaction to different internal and external challenges, such as *self-directed learning* and *neo-Marxist assumptions about readers and texts* (p. 9). Gutteridge (1994) concludes that "this is as appropriate a time as any to look back to where we started, explain what we thought we were doing, and estimate how far we might have come" (p. 8). The teaching of English in Ontario is also influenced by heightened linguistic diversity. In addition, the concept of "literacy" is construed in different ways. For instance, the MEO (2006) states that literacy determines how students communicate in society and follow social practices and relationships, along with acquiring knowledge, language, and culture. Harris and Hodges (1995) define literacy as "minimal ability to read and write in a designated language, as well as mindset or way of thinking about the use of reading and writing in everyday life" (p. 142). However, Freire and Macedo (1987) propose that "literacy highlights

the significant act of reading that leads to rethinking" (p. 29). Reconciling these diverse views, MEO (2006) proposes that literacy entails and contributes to students' intellectual, social, cultural, and emotional growth.

The EEC (MEO, 2006) is based on the belief that broad proficiency in English is essential to students' success in both their social and academic lives. In order to achieve this proficiency, students should be reflective learners, extensive readers and critical thinkers. Cummins (1994) also maintains that teachers must recognize second language (L2) learners as diverse individuals if they want students to succeed by engaging and investing in their schoolwork. In this respect, Freire and Macedo's (1987) *cultural capital* concept, which is further discussed in the Literature Review chapter, states that students recall and express their identities and ideas, based on their past and new social experience/s, which they gather while reading different texts in school.

Thus, the multilingual, multicultural setting of Ontario schools offers a rich setting of observation and analysis. The issues that need to be observed include how ELLs from diverse cultural settings react to the existing EEC (MEO, 2006), what academic expectations educators hold for these students and what achievements ELLs make in ELA classes, especially with regard to reading. Hence, this study will investigate what challenges ELLs face while comprehending the English literacy material presented in ELA classrooms, what learning strategies ELLs apply to overcome the challenges they face, and how ELLs acquire the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) in mainstream ELA classes.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

To explain the rationale behind the theoretical framework that I have adopted for the purpose of this study, I will first outline the cultural and linguistic diversity of ELLs, their

academic responsibilities, the English teaching objectives of the EEC (MEO, 2006), and the relevance of these objectives to Canadian multicultural setting. I will also mention some concepts related to ESL teaching and learning including the works of David and Yvonne Freeman (1998) and Cummins (2003). Finally, I will mention CALLA (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) strategies that help ELLs in making English medium literacy material comprehensible.

1.2.1. Diversity among student population

Issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity abound in Canadian academic circles. There is a widespread policy support for high rates of immigration to Canada which has the highest immigration rate in the world (Library of Parliament, 2004). Weeks (2005) observes that all of Canada's main political parties have accepted either maintaining or escalating the present rate of immigration to compensate for a scarcity of skilled workers and to make up for an ageing population. Consequently, the escalating immigration rate has made Canadian classrooms culturally and linguistically diverse. However, teaching language to culturally diverse students requires different teaching approaches. Therefore, ESL pedagogy must be suitable for culturally diverse students and supportive to their cultural heritage. In this respect, the MEO (2005) suggests that English speaking students should "support the language [English] learning efforts of newcomers" (p. 21), who may face (English) speaking and listening problems.

This issue is further complicated by students entering the Ontario school system at different points. Students new to Ontario come from different countries around the world and may be enrolled in any grade at any time throughout the academic year (MEO, 2006). Their age, country of origin, and previous educational experience vary and play a vital role in determining the level of support they will require to succeed in the classroom. A number of newcomers arrive

in Canada with their families as a part of well-organized immigration process, so they may have studied English as a foreign language in their countries of origin. However, the MEO (2006) observes that a few newcomers may enter Canada as a result of dire circumstances, such as disasters in their homelands, and may not have had prior access to education. Also, there may be learners from Aboriginal and other communities who speak languages other than English and maintain distinct cultural and linguistic traditions. The MEO (2006) also points out that pupils returning from a prolonged stay in another country, where they may have received education in a language other than English, bring additional variety in classes. Therefore, the formation of a common pedagogy for English teaching becomes a complex issue, given the multi-sociocultural setting of Ontario classrooms.

1.2.2. The objectives of English teaching

The EEC (MEO, 2006) specifies the objectives of English teaching, stating the significance of reading skill in developing other linguistic skills. The MEO (2006) recommends that a student should achieve different reading skills:

- comprehending reading content
- collecting information from text
- thinking critically and creatively while reading
- planning and processing reading material
- expressing and organizing ideas

To achieve these skills, the EEC (MEO, 2006) specifies the responsibilities of English learners:

- Students should accept the responsibility of their scholastic improvement.

- Students should expand their English literacy skills, when they look for recreational reading materials.
- Students should utilize multimedia material, related to the different subject areas that address their personal interests.
- Students should converse with parents, peers, and teachers about what they read, write, and think in their daily lives.

Thus, the MEO (2006) has set several specific goals for ELLs considering their diverse cultural, social, educational and family backgrounds. The EEC (MEO, 2006) is based on the belief that broad proficiency in English reading is essential to students' success in both their social and academic lives. In order to achieve this proficiency, students should be reflective, extensive and critical readers. Hence, the guidelines of the EEC (MEO, 2006) contain broader perspectives, and therefore are applicable for investigating ELLs' application of learning strategies and their achievement of reading objectives (MEO, 2006) in a mainstream English classroom.

1.2.3. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

In this section, I will explain Cummins' (2003) concept of CALP that helps to understand EEC objectives (MEO, 2006). CALP refers to the distinction between the acquisition of conversational fluency and academic language. Cummins (2003) mentions, "conversational fluency is acquired through face-to-face interaction, while academic language is acquired in social institutions beyond family" (p. 323). Cummins (2003) maintains that second language learners require five to seven years to acquire CALP in an L2, even if they are literate in their mother tongue (L1). L2 learners who are not literate in their L1 may require longer to acquire CALP in their L2. Therefore, Cummins (2003) cautions that teachers should be wary of

mainstreaming ESL students too early. The MEO (2005) agrees that teachers may misjudge L2 students, assuming they can handle academic English before they have acquired CALP. Such L2 students may require a few more years of support and encouragement from teachers to develop academic language skills (CALP) in their L2.

Cummins (2003) further proposes that *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) may be achieved within approximately two years of beginning experience to learn an L2, but surface fluency must not be mistaken for CALP. He argues that students' "academic language abilities" (CALP) should be developed before placing L2 learners in mainstream classroom settings. Therefore, the MEO (2005) advises teachers to "understand that students may need hundreds of exposures to a particular language construction over a period of years, and in different contexts, before they master it" (p. 21). In his Threshold Hypothesis, Cummins' (1979) also claims that BICS must be developed to the threshold level in order for learners to achieve CALP. Thus, Cummins (2003) illustrates the noteworthy aspect of second language acquisition (SLA) and recommends learning methods for ELLs to achieve second language proficiency.

1.2.4. Principles of teaching reading to ELLs

David and Yvonne Freeman's (Freeman & Freeman's) (1998) English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) teaching principles, which are further discussed in the Literature Review chapter, are:

- From whole to part.
- Learner-centered lessons.
- Meaning and purpose in readings for learners.

- Social interaction based lessons.
- Oral and written skills developing lessons.
- Students' first language and culture supportive lessons.
- Belief in learner's potential.

Thus, Freeman and Freeman's (the Freemans')[3] (1998) principles and the concepts of *cultural capital* (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and CALP (Cummins, 2003) support the inclusion of students' prior knowledge, while assigning them the reading material. In general, all these scholars have insisted on three factors: student's individuality, quality of text, and the connection between student and text. The works of these scholars may help ELLs achieve the reading skills specified by the EEC (MEO, 2006).

1.2.5. Learning strategies for making reading comprehensible

ELLs may face different challenges in ELA classes while attempting to comprehend English literacy material. Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) proposes learning strategies to assist ELLs. The CALLA learning strategies, which are further discussed in the Literature Review chapter, include:

- Social strategies (asking for help, discussing with teachers and/or peers)
- Cognitive strategies (activating prior knowledge, using context of sentence and/or text, using picture clues, making inferences, rereading, using dictionary, translating text)

[3] Hereafter, Freeman and Freeman will be referred as the Freemans.

- Metacognitive strategies (monitoring comprehension, using metalinguistic knowledge) ELLs may apply some of these CALLA learning strategies to comprehend English literacy material in ELA classes.

1.3. Questions Directing the Research

In light of the MEO (2006) English teaching objectives, and the work of the Freemans (1998), Freire and Macedo (1987), Cummins (2003), and Chamot and O'Malley (1994), this study will examine:

1. What challenges do ELLs face while trying to comprehend the English literacy material presented in mainstream English Language Arts classes?
2. What learning strategies do ELLs apply to comprehend English literacy material?
3. How do ELLs acquire the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) in mainstream English Language Arts classes?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study may explain different aspects of English language teaching and learning with regard to the newly arrived immigrant students. Therefore, it may encourage ELA teachers to be more critically reflective of their teaching methodologies. Although Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) CALLA learning strategies are well tested in the American schools, my study may enhance the understanding of the application of these strategies in achieving reading objectives (MEO, 2006). Finally, this study provides ELLs with the opportunity to reflect on the challenges they face while comprehending the English literacy material presented in ELA classrooms, the learning strategies they apply to overcome the challenges they face, and their achievement of the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) in mainstream ELA classes.

1.5. Explanation of Terminology used in the Study

1. Background Knowledge (prior knowledge): The knowledge that students have acquired through their everyday experiences and that help them in comprehending the texts they read (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).
2. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills or "BICS" are language skills that are applied in everyday social interaction. These language skills are used in face-to-face interactions, and do not necessarily imply academic tasks (Cummins, 2003).
3. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or "CALP" refers to the language proficiency required to perform academic tasks. It is a prerequisite for overall academic success (Cummins, 2003).
4. Decoding is the skill of determining how to guess the meaning of unknown/unfamiliar words by using knowledge of letters and word patterns (Freeman & Freeman, 2000).
5. The English Elementary Curriculum (EEC), published by the Ministry of Education of Ontario (MEO) in 2006, replaced the Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1– 8: Language, 1997. Beginning in September 2006, all language programs for Grades 1 to 8 were based on the expectations outlined in the EEC document.
6. English Language Arts (ELA) refers to the five strands of the Language Arts that are reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing (visual literacy) (MEO, 2006).
7. English Language Learners (ELLs) are speakers of English whose first language is not English (Freeman & Freeman, 2008).
8. English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) refers to the study of English by speakers whose first language is not English (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).

9. *L1*: A first language (mother tongue or native language) is the language learned since birth (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).
10. *L2*: A Second Language is any language learned after the first language (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).
11. The Ministry of Education of Ontario (MEO) is the department of the Ontario government responsible for regulating government policy, providing funding, and implementing curriculum planning and direction at all levels of public education.
12. *Reading Comprehension* is the concept that the Freemans (1998) describe as understanding a text that is read.

1.6. Thesis Structure

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review, pointing out patterns and key elements that exist within the literature. I review the Freemans' (1998) seven principles for ESL/EFL teaching, Vygotsky's (1978) psycho-linguistic and socio-cultural concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), Freire and Macedo's (1987) notion of *cultural capital*, Spolsky's (1989) *Two Cluster Theory*, Stanovich's (1988) *Matthew Effect*, and Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) *CALLA* learning strategies. Then, I review the Freemans' (2008) propositions about the types of English language learners (ELLs). Finally, I discuss different reading skills specified by MEO (2006), and also present some reading practices to achieve these reading skills.

In Chapter 3, I provide the context of the study, beginning with the background information of the study site and the pertinent information about the teacher. Then, I present a detailed discussion of methodology for this study and analyze qualitative research methodology. I also discuss case study as a research methodology and my rationale for choosing this study design. Then I provide information on participant inclusion, methods of data collection (i.e.,

questionnaires, observations, and interviews), and the process of data analysis. Finally, I describe validity and reliability issues in my study.

In Chapter 4, I present my research findings. I provide pertinent information about the student participants and their views on relevant issues, such as reading texts. Then, I describe the findings of my classroom observations, including the teacher's teaching methodologies and the students' participation patterns.

In Chapter 5, I provide results and discussion. On the basis of the collected data, I analyze the challenges that the student participants faced when trying to comprehend the assigned readings in ELA classes. Then, I discuss the learning strategies that the student participants applied in ELA classes. Finally, I analyze the reading comprehension achievements of the student participants, given the MEO (2006) objectives.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I outline my conclusion, recommendations and future implications.

1.7. Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the background of my study. I have also explained the theoretical framework that included the objectives of the EEC (MEO, 2006), the issue of diversity among the student population in Canadian academic circles, Cummins' (2003) CALP, the Freemans' (1998) principles of ESL/EFL teaching, and Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) CALLA learning strategies. Further, I have presented the research questions, followed by the significance of study, the terminology used in the study and the thesis structure.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe some principles and concepts related to the ESL teaching and learning process that include the work of the Freemans (1998), Vygotsky (1978), Freire and Macedo (1987), Spolsky (1989), and Stanovich (1988). Next, I mention some learning strategies presented by Chamot and O'Malley (1986) and others. I also review the Freemans' (2008) propositions about the types of English language learners (ELLs). Finally, I discuss different reading skills specified by MEO (2006) and present some reading practices to help achieve these reading skills.

The ever increasing multicultural character of the academic system in Ontario (Gutteridge, 1994) makes the task of analyzing English teaching a complex and multi-faceted issue. Here, I discuss some principles and concepts related to ESL teaching and learning that are helpful in achieving the teaching objectives of EEC (MEO, 2006).

2.2. Principles and Concepts Explaining Different Aspects of ESL Teaching and Learning Process

The Freemans' (1998) seven principles of ESL/EFL teaching, Vygotsky's (1978) psycho-linguistic and socio-cultural concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), Freire and Macedo's (1987) concept of *cultural capital*, Spolsky's (1989) *Two Cluster Theory,* and Stanovich's (1988) *Matthew Effect* explain different aspects of ESL teaching and learning process. These scholarly notions also indicate the challenges ELLs may face while making reading material comprehensible.

2.2.1. The Freemans' principles for ESL/EFL teaching

The Freemans' (1998) principles of ESL/EFL teaching propose an effective teaching method for teaching English in the ever changing multicultural, multilingual setting in Ontario classrooms. These principles are supported and amplified in their other works (Freeman & Freeman, 2000, 2001, 2008). Here, I explain the Freemans' (1998) seven principles for ESL/EFL teaching that I have introduced in the previous chapter.

1. From whole to part: The Freemans (1998) argue that students need the big picture of reading at first so that they understand what they are learning. For example, a suitable title often supplies the main idea, the whole, of text. If the same text is broken into several parts, students may not be able to make much sense out of the text, though they know all parts, for example, words and sentences of the text.

2. Learner-centered lessons: The Freemans (1998) suggest that lessons should commence with students' pre-acquired knowledge and pre-developed interests, because "students like to read and write about themselves and their own experiences" (p. 91), and they may find it difficult to comprehend texts if readings go against their beliefs. The MEO (2005) also instructs that reading material may include substance that may violate some students' beliefs or values, so it is imperative to be responsive to cultural distinctions and to support those students to recognize and talk about these disagreements in a soothing situation. Therefore, the Freemans (1998) maintain that despite the fact that teachers and students are different individuals shaped in different ways, teachers should find suitable pleasure reading materials for different students.

3. Meaning and purpose in readings for learners: The Freemans (1998) observe that students produce quality results if reading assignments meet their real needs because "they are

more willing to take risks involved in making meaning and completing it" (p. 127). The Freemans (1998) further suggest that lessons should have meaning and purpose for learners' present lives and "teachers can connect curriculum to students' lives through themes based on big questions" (p. 82). For example, "students may read letters written by their friends and reply to them by trying new things because they focus on the content, not the form" (p. 127). The MEO (2005) also recommends that all English learners be given chances to exchange ideas about their languages, cultures, and experiences, so that they may expand their attentiveness to both the differences and similarities among their cultures and languages, and all learners can have a sense of belonging. Thus, clearly defining the purpose of a reading assignment motivates readers to comprehend the text.

4. Social interaction based lessons: The Freemans (1998) recommend that reading should be taught through content involving students in real communication. The Freemans (1998) disagree with the professionals who view language learning as language formation that only takes place when learners practice language skills. They argue that language learning takes place when students are involved in meaningful social communication because learning a language is connecting reading texts to pre-acquired experience, and not merely reading the print.

5. Oral and written skills developing lessons: The Freemans (1998) propose that in the process of foreign or second language learning, the skills of speaking and writing are best acquired simultaneously, though some critics assume that oral skills precede the development of literacy. Stating that oral language skills are a critical component of literacy in any language, the MEO (2005) also argues:

> When you give students frequent opportunities to converse in English, you stimulate the development of listening and speaking skills, give students a broad sense of English

> language and its construction, and help English language learners connect with their peers and develop self confidence (p. 19).

Gibbons (2002) supports this argument and maintains that classroom talk determines whether or not children learn. Furthermore, the MEO (2008) urges that oral language be recognized "as the foundation for learning in all subject areas" and that talk be incorporated "into everything that students do" (p 38). However, accepting the significance of both oral and written skills, the Freemans (1998) instruct students to write about their reading immediately after finishing it, followed by a discussion with both teachers and peers, sharing their ideas.

6. Lessons that support students' first language and culture: The Freemans (1998) propose that learners develop confidence, even in an L2 setting, when teachers recognize L2 learners' L1 and culture. Therefore, Cummins (1994) mentions that schools should carry the flow of knowledge, ideas and feeling between home and school. The *home-school bridge* concept (Liu & Taylor, 2004) also appeals to teachers to utilize students' first language and culture in supportive lessons. Thus, the Freemans (1998) argue that "English language learners come from a variety of first language backgrounds, so it is critical that the lessons draw on their backgrounds, their interests, and their strengths" (p. 89). Such lessons make connections between schools and homes and increase parental involvement in their students' scholastic improvement.

7. Belief in learner's potential: The Freemans (1998) maintain that teachers who center their curriculum on learners' experiences and interests build their students' self-esteem and expand their potential in a natural way. The Freemans (1998) further observe that "older students learning a new language may not be willing to risk the embarrassment of answering the teachers' question in front of their classmates" (p. 127), but "the same students expand their own potential and create possibilities for success for younger students, if teacher shows belief in students'

potential" (p. 245). Thus, enhancing students' self-esteem encourages them to comprehend the assigned text.

2.2.2. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Freemans' (1998) principles and suggestions for language teachers are primarily based on Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, the *socio-psycholinguistic orientation*. The ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) includes both the social and individual psychological aspects of language learning and combines them with educational problems related to the learning process. Vygotsky (1978) distinguishes between what a learner can do with and without help by illustrating the ZPD as "the level not yet achieved independently, but in the process of maturation" (p. 86). Vygotsky (1978) links *what is learned* and *what can be learned*, presenting the four steps of the ZPD:

1. The learner can already perform several tasks independently.
2. The learner learns to perform some more tasks with the help of teachers and peers in a suitable learning environment.
3. The learner gradually learns to work independently on these recently learned tasks.
4. The learner can perform these recently learned tasks independently.

Highlighting the coordination of these four steps, Tharp and Gallimore (1990) propose that a child imitates an adult in order to learn different skills and gradually modifies the ability to perform specific work without help.

Vygotsky (1978) argues that the role of education is to encourage children and promote their individual learning by providing them with experiences that are within their ZPD. A teacher's guidance provides this encouragement that enables learners to learn new tasks on their own. Vygotsky (1978) labels this encouragement the ZPD and explains, "the level of potential

development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Therefore, the ZPD includes all three basic elements of the process of learning: the learner, the teacher, and the learning environment.

Rodgers and Rodgers (2004) agree that the concept of *scaffolding* is closely related to the ZPD. Scaffolding implies that a teacher or peer should provide assistance to a student in his or her ZPD as required. Such assistance is later removed (just as scaffolds are removed during construction) when it is no longer required. The Freemans (2000) point out that scaffolding allows students to learn to read by engaging in discussion with others.

2.2.3. Freire and Macedo's Cultural Capital

The concept of *cultural capital* (Freire & Macedo, 1987) is significant for the language learning process in multicultural, multilingual classrooms. Freire and Macedo (1987) maintain that students are bearers of their families and societies' histories, experiences, and cultures. While interpreting the reading text, students recall and draw on their cultural capital to make meaning of the texts. As Freire and Macedo (1987) argue, individual subjectivity cannot be separated from social objectivity. For instance, students from different social backgrounds may possess diverse expressions of culture. Some students may connect the concept of culture to social practices whereas others may link it to religious beliefs.

Cultural capital is a way of knowing ourselves and the world around us. The MEO (2008) also suggests, "students learn best when the learning is meaningful to them and relevant to their individual contexts" (p. 38). Freire and Macedo (1987) maintain that educators should respect and legitimize their students' discourses to utilize their students' cultural capital. Identifying the role of cultural capital in the gradual process of scholastic improvement, Freire and Macedo

(1987) propose that emotionally involved readers may link their opinions and personal experience/s with reading and ultimately may identify with the voice of the author in it. In addition, McNamara (2004) suggests that the variation in cultural capital may result in students' different levels of interpretation skills. Thus, ESL teachers must be sensitive to students' cultural capital in choosing and teaching lessons because L2 learning process and cultural capital are closely connected.

In this respect, the MEO (2005) proposes that teachers should "invite students to read aloud poems in their first language, provide an English translation if possible, and demonstrate [and explain] the significance of the poem within their culture" (p. 17). However, Coelho (2004) argues, "translation may not help if student hasn't [not] already studied the concept in his or her first language" (p. 230). Similarly, Coelho (2004) urges that although "focusing on topics that highlight non-dominant cultures" (p. 45) is a positive way to raise students' awareness of cultural diversity, teachers should help "students see events from varying perspectives" (p. 45) to develop critical thinking skills. Thus, a balanced approach is required towards choosing lessons based on students' cultural capital.

2.2.4. Spolsky's Two Cluster Theory

Spolsky's (1989) Two Cluster Theory includes an individual and a social focus. Spolsky's (1989) theory is complementary to the concept of cultural capital (Freire & Macado, 1987). The *external cluster* refers to the social context, whereas the *internal cluster* refers to the language learner and the learner's commitment to L2 learning. Spolsky (1989) attributes L2 learning to the interaction between learners and their external prospects for learning the language. Spolsky (1989) observes the learning process as a pattern: the social context leads to the formation of

attitudes (of various kinds for various learners) and motivation (at different levels), depending on the learner's age, personality, capabilities, and previous knowledge. This combination leads to learning opportunities (formal or informal) and linguistic outcomes.

Spolsky (1989) suggests that learners' social, cognitive, and academic backgrounds are ignored in most language teaching classes, thus "some individuals are more successful than others in mastering the language, even though the language experience has in all cases been ostensibly identical" (p. 2). He argues that social, cognitive, and academic backgrounds must become the basis of education and language acquisition to bridge the teaching-learning gap between students and teachers, because "second languages are learned through the relationship between social context and individual psychology" (p. 27). However, Spolsky (1989) also clarifies that "any theory of second language learning that leads to a single method is obviously wrong, if you look at the complexity of the circumstances under which second languages are learned" (p. 2). Therefore, Spolsky (1989) highlights the need to combine individual effort and social circumstances in the second language learning process – an approach that is applicable to multicultural, multilingual language classroom settings in Ontario. Spolsky's (1989) theory specifies the combined role of focuses on the individual and on the social context in L2 acquisition. Stanovich's (1988) *Matthew Effect* highlights the other side of L2 acquisition and reading comprehension.

2.2.5. Stanovich's Matthew Effect

Stanovich (1988) coined the term the *Matthew Effect* to describe the educational dilemma that students face throughout their schooling. Students are expected to perform at specific academic levels, even though they may lack prerequisite information and skills. Stanovich

(1988) explains that this may curb their motivation, and subsequently lead them to become less involved in reading related activities and practices. Consequently, this may hamper their comprehension skills. Stanovich (1988) clarifies that as long as this negative circle continues, it brings troublesome emotional side effects, associated with negative school experiences and low academic achievement. In contrast, students with efficient decoding skills find reading enjoyable and concentrate on the meaning of the text. They tend to read more and more and thus develop their reading abilities.

Thus, the Matthew Effect concept (Stanovich, 1988) explains *the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer* phenomenon. This concept complements the Freemans' (1998) ESL/EFL teaching principles and their recommended reading text instructions that utilize the students' strength and interest as useful tools to improve their reading skills. In this respect, the MEO (2005) recommends that teachers should "establish a supportive classroom climate in which newcomers' language errors are accepted as a normal part of the language-learning process" (p. 19). Stanovich (1988) mentions that upon receiving suitable feedback from teachers, even passive readers may become curious about reading, ask questions and finally make connections between reading and their experience to improve their reading skills.

Thus, the Freemans' (1998) seven principles of ESL/EFL teaching, Vygotsky's (1978) psycho-linguistic and socio-cultural concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), Freire and Macedo's (1987) concept of *cultural capital*, Spolsky's (1989) *Two Cluster Theory,* and Stanovich's (1988) *Matthew Effect* explain different aspects of ESL teaching and learning process. These scholarly notions also indicate the challenges ELLs may face while trying to comprehend reading material. The next section will present some learning strategies including Chamot and O'Malley's (1986) Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

learning strategies that are designed to assist ELLs in overcoming the challenges they face while making reading material comprehensible.

2.3. Learning Strategies

Chamot and O'Malley (1986) identify that the level of difficulty of texts and the reading proficiency of students determine the application of suitable comprehension strategies. Therefore, Chamot and O'Malley's (1986) Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) describes some learning strategies. The CALLA is an instructional model developed to help ELLs in American schools. Chamot and O'Malley (1986) identified some learning strategies applied by ELLs and observed that these strategies could be taught to other ELLs to improve their performance on language learning tasks. Thus, CALLA learning strategies are thoughts and/or activities that help improve learning results. The three types of CALLA learning strategies are as follows:

1. Social strategies: These include interacting with student/s and/or teacher/s in order to assist learning; asking questions for clarification or getting additional explanation and/or verification from a teacher or other expert; cooperating with peers to complete a task and receiving feedback; and applying affective control, such as self-talk to think positively to assist learning tasks, and reducing anxiety by improving one's sense of competence.

2. Cognitive strategies: These include resourcing, such as using reference material (e.g., dictionaries and textbooks); memorizing reading material; drawing on background/prior knowledge by making analogies (e.g., relating new to known information and making personal association); making mental images using imagined or real pictures to learn new information or solve a problem; taking notes and writing down keywords in abbreviated verbal forms; grouping

and/or classifying items (e.g., words and terminology) to be learned; summarizing by writing main ideas gained from listening or reading; deducting or inducing by figuring out rules to understand a concept or complete learning task; rehearsing a word, phrase, or piece of information; and making inferences by using information in the text to guess meanings of new items or predict upcoming information.

3. Metacognitive strategies: These include planning for accomplishing learning tasks; listening or reading selectively to identify main ideas; previewing the main ideas of texts and identifying organizing principles; seeking and arranging conditions that help one learn; monitoring one's own comprehension by thinking while listening and/or reading; monitoring one's own production by thinking while speaking and/or writing; and evaluating how well one has achieved a learning objective.

Among the CALLA learning strategies, social strategies are widely recommended. For instance, recommending some interesting tasks based on social strategies, the MEO (2005) states:

> Cooperative learning, which emphasizes the process as well as the product of group work, gives all students opportunities to deepen their understanding and to develop their problem solving skills through purposeful talk, to work with others (from a variety of cultural backgrounds), to develop friendships that otherwise may not happen, and to experience satisfaction that comes from helping others. (p. 22)

The Freemans (2000) also accept the utility of social learning strategies and suggest that "through careful selection of materials, close observation of students and an understanding of how literacy develops, teachers can support even the first graders with their effective reading programs" (p. 16). Chamot and O'Malley (1986) insist that all three types of CALLA learning strategies help develope students' reading comprehension skills. These researchers suggest that ELLs should apply suitable CALLA strategies to achieve different forms of knowledge, i.e.,

declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge includes what we know about a given topic, such as word definitions, facts, rules, and sequences of events. Procedural knowledge include what we know how to do, like the ability to understand and generate language. Chamot and O'Malley (1986) further state that declarative knowledge (e.g., knowledge about grammar, literary themes, plot, etc.) may be acquired quickly, but procedural knowledge (e.g., students learning to use language as a tool for learning) must be acquired gradually with practice. Thus, the CALLA strategies were developed on the premise that reading is a cognitive process in which readers recall prior knowledge and experiences and apply them to texts.

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies are also widely discussed by several scholars. For instance, Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that "reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by [being] intertwined with knowledge of the world" (p. 29). McNamara (2004) explains that to comprehend a text, prolific and independent readers may apply *elaborative* interpretation with the help of ideas not given in the reading, or readers may utilize *backward* interpretation with the help of ideas given beforehand in the reading. McNamara (2004) also feels that elaborative interpretation is more considerable, yet complex to attain because it can be foretelling (i.e., telling what is going to appear next in the reading). Nevertheless, elaborative interpretation allows a reader to interpret connections between the present and earlier reading. However, the Freemans (2000) observe that interpreting a given reading is difficult, if a reader does not understand the meanings of words in it. Thus, decoding words and interpretation processes are inter-connected. Nevertheless, acquiring comprehension and interpretation skills requires more than mere decoding skills. For instance, Long and Golding (1993) argue that less skilled (reluctant) readers make fewer interpretations that go beyond the explicit meaning of the reading. They contend that skilled readers are more

likely to generate inferences that repair conceptual gaps between clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. However, less skilled readers tend to ignore these gaps or fail to make the inferences necessary to fill in the gaps.

The Freemans (2000) observe that even well-informed readers who lack reading comprehension skills may face *gaps* in text. Therefore, they may not interpret the text, especially if they have no specific reading goals, such as identification of the text with their cultural capital. McKoon and Ratcliff (1992) also argue that readers' pre-acquired information may remain static and disconnected to the text, either because readers do not realize that the information is applicable, or because they have difficulty applying information to novel situations. Thus, the Freemans (2000) observe that students need a teacher's guidance to make connections between information they possess and the text they are reading. McNamara (2004) concludes that skilled readers have more meta-cognitive information and reading strategies that provide them with instruction to make a proper interpretation.

Alexander and Kulikowich (1991) maintain that readers who possess more information about the text are better able to interpret it. Bransford and Johnson (1972) also observe that students may not understand a reading without a title because a title activates pre-acquired information, which helps in interpreting a text. Accepting that a reader may have diverse information connected to a text, McNamara (2004) argues that a reader uses stable and interconnected information because coherent and connected information remains stable and easily retrievable. As a result, readers with more information on a topic have better interpretative skills than those who lack sufficient information.

Realizing the significance of both possession of more information about a text and application of suitable reading strategies, Robinson and McKenna (2008) propose reading assessments for three levels of comprehension skill (i.e., literal, inferential, and critical). They subdivide these three comprehension skill levels into specific skill levels. For example, the inferential level can be categorized into inferring the main idea and inferring cause-and-effect relationships. Nevertheless, they argue that these skills are similar to *tools*, so readers should know when and how to use them to achieve a specific purpose. Therefore, to utilize these tools a student needs specific comprehension strategies, for example re-reading and reading ahead.

Although various theories and models are presented for the improvement of reading comprehension skills, most of them have diverse assumptions. Nevertheless, Chamot and O'Malley (1986), Freire and Macedo (1987), the Freemans (2000), and McNamara (2004) point out one common assumption: It is necessary for ELLs to improve their comprehension and interpretation skills to improve reading skills.

2.4. Suitable Reading Instruction for Different ELLs

The Freemans (2008) maintain that most researchers have agreed on *what* must be taught and *when* to develop comprehension and interpretation skills while teaching reading, but there is less agreement about *how* to teach the identified components, so that students progress from naïve to mature readers. To reply to this *how*, Freire and Macedo (1987) propose that students should "not have to memorize description mechanically, but should learn its underlying significance" (p. 33). Analyzing the dilemma of *how*, Campbell (1996) views that multicultural, multilingual settings make teachers' job difficult and complex. Considering such complexities, the Freemans (2000) recommend that L2 teachers should teach students how to navigate

successfully through their own language, the multilingual world, and the mainstream school community that may have a fixed and pre-conceived notion of language teaching. Since multicultural, multilingual diversity is growing in Ontario schools, teachers are being challenged to maintain a level of common understanding with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The MEO (2006) points out that the factor of individuality is prevalent among ELLs in Ontario and thus teachers need to choose suitable teaching instructions as per the type of student. As the Freemans (2008) observe, "ELLs are three times as likely as native English speakers to be low academic achievers; they are also twice as likely to be retained to repeat a grade" (p. 32). Being familiar with this factor, the MEO (2005) recommends that teachers should support ELLs in all grades at the beginning stages of English language acquisition, in a new environment to begin communication with their peers, because newcomers need to learn essential phrases, such as "please, repeat that" (p. 7), to get benefit from classroom teaching. To clarify this phenomenon, the Freemans (2008) describe both the types of ELLs and different teaching instructions. The Freemans (2008) propose three main types of ELLs: (a) students with adequate schooling; (b) students with limited formal and/or interrupted schooling; and (c) long term English learners.

The Freemans (2008) suggest that the first type of students, newly arrived in the country with adequate schooling in their native country, may perform below an educator's expectation on standardized tests given in English, but they may soon start performing well. The Freemans (2008) further explain that these students may not appear proficient in all four English language skills and may struggle initially, but may achieve academic success later on as a result of having studied English in their homelands.

The Freemans (2008) observe that the second type of students, who have recently arrived with limited or interrupted formal schooling in their native countries, possess limited native language literacy, and also perform poorly in English. The Freemans (2008) further clarify that "[L]imited English [P]roficient/LEP students enter classes at different ages with different academic backgrounds; some do very well while many struggle" (p. 33). The Freemans (2008) also observe that the parents of these students may have low social and financial backgrounds, so such students may suffer from cultural shock, a lack of social contacts, and may remain frightened and confused in school because of their need for extra tutoring.

Explaining the third type, the long term English learners, the Freemans (2008) assert that these learners may have had ESL or bilingual instruction, but no consistent language learning program in either English or their primary language, so they may remain weak in reading and writing skills. The Freemans (2008) argue that these learners may appear lazy to some teachers or as underachievers for not scoring well on tests, though they may receive high grades in oral assignments for speaking English well. Thus, the Freemans (2008) contend that these students may have had education in English since kindergarten and may be fluent English speakers, but may still struggle in English reading and writing skills. They may not develop their primary language skills because all their schooling has been in English. Chang (2001) observes that the number of Asian students is increasing in this category.

The Freemans (2008) contend that teachers are not provided with detailed information about learners, so teachers need to collect the required information on their own: identifying the types of students, choosing appropriate reading texts, and providing proper instructional support and feedback. Sometimes, the information they collect may be misleading. For instance, parents may falsely mention that they speak English at home, only to keep their children in regular

English class. Even language proficiency tests may not provide exact information about students' capabilities because students may not apply the linguistic skills they have acquired if they are suffering from culture shock or nervousness. Thus, scholars suggest collecting various pieces of information, such as information on ELLs' native language knowledge and literacy skill (Crawford, 1992), English vocabulary knowledge (Gottlieb, 2006), student work samples, parental and school records, and student's socioeconomic status (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). These factors provide information about the available language learning resources.

The Freemans (2008) urge that accurate assessment of learners' ELL types be attained for ESL programs and language teaching instruction to be suitable. For instance, a student could receive one or two periods of ESL instruction each week and during other English periods attend mainstream classes. However, the Freemans (2008) observe that such student background analysis and co-ordination between ESL teachers and mainstream teachers rarely take place.

The MEO (2005) recommends, "where language acquisition is concerned, there's safety in small numbers" (p.22). Hence, the Freemans (2008) further explain that ESL pullout programs that provide small group support in separate classes are helpful in determining the needs of ELLs, but ELLs may miss the instruction in mainstream classes and also may feel stigmatized for being labeled with learning deficiencies. In this respect, MEO (2008) observes:

> Full-day, segregated settings may limit students' participation. A balance is needed so that students experience a learning environment where they can take risks and accelerate the development of their skills with support, while feeling a sense of belonging and empowerment in the school. (p. 44)

Thus, ESL teachers must be careful while placing ELLs in any L2 support program.

The Freemans (2008) analyze the ESL *push-in* system, in which the ESL teacher teaches in a mainstream classroom, and assert that the system may establish strong co-ordination between ESL teachers and mainstream ones, even though teachers may require extra teaching hours for such co-ordination. In addition, mainstream teachers with special training may deliver ESL instructions effectively. Similarly, a paraprofessional English teacher, who may speak ELLs' L1s, can serve this purpose. Nevertheless, Clair (1995) observes that ESL students tend not to be properly supported before and after their mainstreaming. Therefore, Ashworth (1993) recommends collective support for ESL students from parents, interpreters, counselors, and ESL, mainstream and heritage language teachers.

Likewise, the Freemans (2008) recommend the *Preview, View and Review* method for L2 teaching through content and ELLs' L1s. The method insists on the clarification and explanation of the background of English reading content in learners' primary language. The stage of *preview* recalls and refreshes learners' pre-acquired knowledge in ELLs' L1s; the *view* stage engages learners in learning English (L2) content; and finally, the *review* stage encourages delivering the comprehended part of text in ELLs' L1s.

Nevertheless, the Freemans (2008) are cautious about differentiating types of ELLs because collecting information about these students is a complex issue. However, the Freemans (1998) consider the development of reading skills as a predictable and sequential process. Thus, for students, the Freemans (1998) recommend regular writing and discussion activities based on assigned readings, students' interests and their previous experiences, while viewing them as *active meaning makers*.

Hence, to draw on different scholars' principles of English teaching and recommendations for improving reading comprehension skills, educators should know about different types of ELLs since each type has different characteristics (Freeman & Freeman, 2008). Therefore, the Freemans (2008) have distinguished between different types of ELLs and suggested suitable teaching instructions for all of them.

2.5. Reading Practices for Achieving Reading Skills Specified by MEO (2006)

The Freemans (2000) assert that "politicians campaign on reading reform and enforce new policies for reading instruction, but little attention has been given to clarifying the goals of reading instruction" (p. 1). However, the EEC (MEO, 2006) clarifies that ELLs should achieve different reading skills that include comprehending reading content, collecting information from text, thinking critically and creatively while reading, planning, and processing reading material, and expressing and organizing ideas. The reading skills, specified by MEO (2006), and different reading practices to achieve these reading skills are explained and analyzed by some scholars under the different themes.

The EEC (MEO, 2006) expects that students should acquire skills of reading from different genres, grasping the ideas communicated in texts, and applying them in new contexts. The MEO (2005) also recommends reading texts with imaginative, natural language, and visual descriptions that are pleasant, informative, interesting, predictable and familiar to students. In this respect, Melton et al. (2004) and Langer et al. (1990) recommend that students read both expository and narrative texts. The Freemans (2000) also insist that students must understand and use different types of expository texts, in which the purpose of the author is to inform, explain, describe, or define the subject. They feel that frequent reading of expository texts is linked to

acquiring reading skills. However, Langer et al. (1990) argue that learners' reading skills improve as a result of reading narrative texts that describe a sequence of fictional or non-fictional events. The MEO (2007) also recommends reading narrative texts possessing sufficient difficulty level for literacy development. However, Melton et al. (2004) propose that the difficulty level of all sorts of texts should be well-balanced (i.e., neither too hard to frustrate readers, nor too easy to bore them) so that optimal learning takes place, helping improve vocabulary and other reading skills. The Freemans (1998) also insist on the selection of both expository and narrative texts, both of which should be *meaningful* and *whole*, and relate to the *cultural capital* of the learner.

The MEO (2006) mentions that students should develop skills of adopting suitable comprehension strategies and be able to think critically about the ideas and information encountered in texts. The Freemans (2001) mention that students should be both intensive and extensive readers to develop the skill of critical reading. The goal of intensive reading is to gain a complete and detailed understanding of texts. Pilgreen (2000) explains that intensive reading indicates a careful reading of a shorter passage in a foreign language for practicing reading skills. For instance, it may aim to distinguish the main idea of a text from the detail, or to guess the meaning of unknown words. Extensive reading (also known as Pleasure Reading, Silent Reading/SSR, and Free Voluntary Reading) refers to reading with the aim of gaining an overall understanding of the material instead of stressing the meaning of individual words or sentences. Pilgreen (2000) feels that the intensive reading approach to teaching reading in a foreign language deters students from *real* reading because it only gives them a *part* and not the *whole* picture and they may lose their interest in reading. Gambell (1986) contends that despite teachers' sophisticated understanding of intensive reading and their ability to utilize it, students will not become fluent L2 readers until they read large quantities of L2 texts. Supporting the

application of extensive reading, the Freemans (2000) argue that students should learn to draw meaning by reading a variety of *interesting* texts, sharing their responses to reading, and talking and writing about the reading. They further maintain that students should go beyond focusing on just correct vocabulary and grammar, but engage more in sharing information. In this respect, Pilgreen (2000) observes that students come to recognize the advantages of extensive reading through actually doing extensive reading. The Freemans (2000) conclude that the practice of extensive reading provides students with the ability and desire to read, which in turn makes them critical readers.

The MEO (2006) states that students should connect assigned readings to their experience, other texts, and the world. Rosenblatt (1991) suggests that a combination of efferent and aesthetic reading enables readers to make texts comprehensible and to connect readings to their experience. Gambell (1986) explains that efferent reading motivates readers to gather information from the text "to solve the given problem" or "to carry out the action" (p. 125). Rosenblatt (1991) also illustrates an example of efferent reading by stating that a mother whose child has consumed poison would read the label of poison bottle as quickly as possible and would note information for her immediate purpose. Therefore, efferent reading helps students who write a reading test that examines their overall understanding of the text. However, aesthetic reading intends that readers should connect their thoughts and feelings to the message and form of the text (Gambell, 1986). For example, readers may find an incident described in the text appealing because something similar happened in their lives. Rosenblatt (1991) maintains that a balance is required between both efferent and aesthetic reading practices. Nevertheless, Gambell (1986) argues that "the same text can be read efferently and aesthetically, depending on purpose and expectations of text" (p. 125). Therefore, teachers determine the purpose of reading (e.g., a

specific answer about text's meaning; a range of possible meanings) and students adopt the type (either efferent or aesthetic) of reading.

The MEO (2006) mentions that students should develop skills of expressing their views and their responses should reflect their skills of critical reading. Highlighting the significance of student response, Probst (2004) argues that "students should not be subordinate to the text and submissive to the teacher; rather they should make meaning out of the text" (p. 236). Probst (2004) also suggests that "brief responses, jotted down in the five or ten minutes after reading, may serve as the basis for a variety of patterns of discussion" (p. 44). Although oral responses appear direct, written responses may enable students to respond freely, maintaining their privacy. Nevertheless, students should initially focus on open responses that allow them to express their feelings. Probst (2004) points out that teachers should motivate students to communicate open responses that should be free from constraints "to see the text only as a basis for prescribed exercises" (p. 46). However, more directed questions (e.g., "what did you feel when...?") are equally significant as they produce several kinds of aesthetic responses. Price (1989) argues that questions requiring short and specific answers "set up barriers to further growth" (p. 187), so both open and directed questions should be open-ended to encourage individual responses. However, the Freemans (2000) accept the significance of all types of responses (e.g., brief, oral, written, etc.) but insist on student response immediately after finishing reading.

Thus, the Freemans (2000), Melton et al. (2004), Langer et al. (1990), Pilgreen (2000), Gambell (1986), Rosenblatt (1991) and Probst (2004) have presented some reading practices to help achieve reading skills.

2.6. Summary

This chapter began with a review of different principles and concepts related to ESL teaching and learning process that include the work of the Freemans (1998), Vygotsky (1978), Freire and Macedo (1987), Spolsky (1989), and Stanovich (1988). Then, I discussed different approaches towards reading skills and various learning strategies presented by Chamot and O'Malley (1994) and others. Next, I described the Freemans' (2008) propositions about the types of English language learners (ELLs). Finally, I discussed different reading skills specified by MEO (2006) and also presented some reading practices to achieve these reading skills. The extant literature suggests that teachers have the difficult task of adopting effective teaching methods for ELLs from diverse cultural settings in the ever changing multicultural, multilingual setting in classes of Ontario.

Given the complexity of significant issues, such as the Matthew Effect on students' reading comprehension, the mere study of related literature is not sufficient in analyzing English teaching methods in the multicultural, multilingual classes of Ontario. Hence, close observation is necessary to understand these recently intensified issues, for instance, how to provide various instructions after an identification of ELL types. These issues raise the question: Do we need different teaching methods in the same classroom if there is diversity among teachers and students? To understand and analyze these issues, I conducted qualitative research. The next chapter will discuss the research context, research methodology, specific research design, methods of data collection, and process of data analysis.

3. Research Context and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In the first part of this chapter, I present the research context, beginning with background information about the study site. Next, I illustrate relevant information about the teacher, her views about significant issues, such as reading texts, and also her pedagogical practices. In the second part, I discuss issues related to methodology. I analyze qualitative research methodology in the first section. In the second section, I explain the case study approach as a research strategy and my rationale for choosing this study design. The third section describes the procedure of participant inclusion. In the fourth section, I discuss the applied methods of data collection: questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The fifth section presents the methods of data analysis. Finally, in the sixth section, I describe validity and reliability issues in my study.

3.2. Research Context

During my early elementary school years in India, I was considered a low(er) achieving student in ELA classes. My ELA teachers would make negative comments about my reading abilities. My parents would persistently tell me to improve my English reading skills without providing me with appropriate reading plans. Later, I improved my English reading skills mostly by reading story books, but remained curious about the challenges ELLs face in ELA classes. Thus, this study is an effort to understand different aspects of English language teaching and learning with regard to ELLs.

The study took place in a Language Arts classroom comprised of Grade Five and Six students at a public school in a city in southern Ontario. According to the 2006 census (Statistics

Canada, 2006) the city had a population of 352,395 people, and the racial makeup of the city was: White (84.8%), Latin American (2.2%), Arab (2.2%), Black (2.2%), Chinese (1.8%), South Asian (1.8%), Aboriginal (1.4%), Southeast Asian (1.1%), West Asian (0.6%), and Others (1.9%). Upon contacting, the ESL consultant of the local school board mentioned that among 2,000 elementary students, approximately 4% of total elementary students were receiving ESL support.

However, the school was situated in a multicultural locality, and enrolled students from multicultural, multilingual origins: Native, Asian, Arab, Afro-American, Latin American etc. The multicultural, multilingual setting of the school can be compared to the multicultural, multilingual setting of Toronto. According to Statistics Canada (2006), the five largest visible minority groups in Toronto are South Asian/Indo-Caribbean (12.0%), Chinese (11.4%), Black/Afro-Caribbean (8.4%), Filipino (4.1%), and Latin American (2.6%). Although English is the main language spoken in Toronto, many other languages, such as French, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Tagalog, and Hindi, are also spoken by a large number of locals.

According to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) (2008), more than 80 languages are represented in its schools. Languages from all over the world, such as Urdu, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, and Cantonese, are spoken by the TDSB students. Around 30% of students (80,000) were born outside of Canada in more than 175 different countries. More than 10% of students (27,000) have been in Canada for the period of three years or less. People For Education (2007), an independent parent-led organization in Ontario, has found that Greater Toronto Area (GTA) schools have 77% of the ESL students in the province, whereas the schools in southwestern Ontario have only 9% of the ESL students in the province. However, the vice-principal of the school informed me that there were 609 students enrolled in the elementary

school (Grade One to Grade Eight) and approximately 60% students were ELLs. She specified that in Grade Five there were 85 students, and among them 52 were ELLs. She also mentioned that of the 84 Grade Six students, 54 were ELLs.

The school's energetic and democratic approach is reflected in its multicultural, multilingual student's council. To develop the rapport between the school and student families, the school organizes various events, such as Meet the Teacher Night and Multicultural Dinner Night. Similarly, to celebrate its multicultural, multilingual setting and student population, the school conducts various student activities throughout the year (e.g., Multicultural Party). Also, the school organizes many literacy programs, such as Book Buddies, Book Exhibition and Literacy Groups.

3.2.1. The teacher

I discussed my observations with the grade 5 and 6 classroom teacher after each observation, and also interviewed her (see Appendix E). The information about her academic background and attitude towards pedagogy helped me understand the student participants' attitudes towards reading activities in ELA classes and brought a different perspective of and deeper insight into the data collection process.

Born in Canada, Mary Walsh[4] was 42 years old and had 8 years of teaching experience. She was pleasant, energetic, passionate, eloquent and candid in expressing her ideas and viewpoints about English teaching methods and her academic considerations.

[4] All participants in this study were assigned pseudonyms.

Before Mary entered the teaching profession as an ESL teacher, she would work as an insurance customer service agent. Then, she decided to make a career change for personal reasons. She did her undergraduate studies in English at one university, and Film Theory and a Bachelor in Applied Arts (BAA) in Film at another university before obtaining a Bachelor of Education. She sharpened her teaching skills by acquiring a better understanding of Canadian education system, child psychology, language learning styles, and SLA.

She studied at a small Catholic school in a mid-sized town. One of her teachers helped her realize that perseverance is necessary to improve performance, but students should observe the performance of other students and draw motivation from it.

Mary's mother was a native English speaker. Her father was French Canadian and a fluent speaker of French. Mary would speak mostly English at home. To improve her French speaking and listening skills, her father would drop her among a group of French speaking friends. She said that language can be learned through experimentation, as Helen Keller did, because the reading of facial expressions and gestures is a key factor in improving listening skills. She stated that this key is also helpful in improving speaking skills, because spoken words and sentences may convey wrong messages, but facial expressions and gestures never betray. Therefore, she concluded that an L2 learner must be a verbal and visual linguist. Mary visualizes herself as a social, cultural and verbal academic learner. She taught ESL in Japan for 3 years. Although she would apply an English only approach, the learning of Japanese helped her avoid cultural shocks and cultural mistakes.

Although daily communication was the foundation of most of her reading lessons, she adopted grammatical approaches as well. She taught grammar within reading contexts and

corrects grammar errors assertively and confidently, yet courteously. She maintained that reading activities, such as independent, guided, and shared readings, were the core of language learning because reading provides required input for language learning. She maintained that students in early elementary grades improved their reading skills rapidly if parents read with them. She also observed that once students developed an interest in reading, they started choosing standard readings that provided them with higher linguistic skills. However, she regretted that because of their busy schedules, many English speaking parents did not read to their children.

Mary accepted that a home-school bridge was significant in improving students' scholastic performances, yet it was difficult to construct for various reasons. She said that such a bridge was the result of two way efforts. Both teachers and parents required understanding of each other's limitations. Only then could they cooperate with each other. However, Mary stated that most ELL parents remained reluctant to talk to teachers. It might be the result of cultural shocks they had encountered. On the other hand, many inexperienced teachers appeared impatient while dealing with ESL parents. These teachers needed to overcome language and cultural barriers. They required plenty of time and patience for it. Nevertheless, they had their own limitations, such as a lack of communication with parents, which hampered their understanding building with the parents.

She added that ELL parents rarely contacted the new teachers, thus building home-school bridge became a relatively difficult task. She explained that if teachers told a student to write a letter in his or her L1 and later on translate it into English, teachers needed the home-school bridge. She said that this only worked if there were strong English speakers at home, but many ELLs' parents were not proficient in English and they did not have much time for their children. She said that she needed to send many messages to the parents, and even if they came to school

once in a while, they hardly talk or tell anything. Therefore, English teachers had to utilize other resources, for example, picture based compositions. Thus, Mary believed that the building of a home-school bridge chiefly depended on English proficiency levels of ELL parents.

Mary also believed that the process of language learning was at times closely connected with the socio-economic status of parents. She gave the assignments that required student-parent discussions. Parents should explain the concepts of North American culture by comparing and contrasting them with their own culture. Similarly, parents should compare and contrast the four skills in their L1s and English. Parents also needed to visit the places like public libraries and video game shops and to attend community meetings in order to provide their children with required information about assigned readings.

She agreed that the MEO (2006) EEC objectives were ambitious and broad, yet significant, so these objectives should be achieved gradually. She explained that she could not make an excuse of cultural ignorance. If she was in Japan, she had to learn Japanese within the given time and eventually got familiar with Japanese cultural practices. She said that the same was true for newly arrived immigrants about learning Canadian culture and English language, as MEO had offered four years to learn English and that was their responsibility to learn it. Nevertheless, she observed that many ELLs were not proficient in their L1 because they came to Canada before becoming proficient in their L1. They did not find much social or cultural support to acquire L1 skills in Canada. She observed that when two persons spoke their L1 other than English in public places, some native English speakers might get angry. They believed that one must speak English in Canada. But Mary argued that no language could be exactly translated into English, because different languages possessed different peculiarities and grammar translation was not possible. Thus, Mary insisted that if two persons were proficient in the same language,

they should converse in it because it was human nature to do easier things first. She believed that their L1 practice would eventually help them in acquiring English skills, so MEO did not prohibit ELLs from using L1s while they acquired English skills. She accepted that the social approach towards English learning was equally significant. This said, she also felt that students should converse with their friends and neighbours in both their L1s and English.

3.2.2. Mary's pedagogical strategies

Mary applied different pedagogical strategies to deliver her instructions effectively and to make the literacy material comprehensible. She had students from different geographic and ethnic origins, but she took interest in students' backgrounds and families. While communicating with her students and their parents, she spoke clearly, paused often, and applied facial expressions and hand gestures. She explained that she had many ESL students, who thought in two languages, their L1s and English. She intended to provide them with enough time for thinking, so pauses were essential when she asked questions. She never used idiomatic or colloquial expressions, and applied simple vocabulary to introduce new concepts.

She kept her students engaged even during independent reading sessions, by giving them short assignments and conducting light physical activities. Her reading aloud demonstrations were always followed by small group discussions, short writing assignments, comprehension exercises, and teacher-student dialogue on one-to-one basis, so students listened to her carefully. However, her reading demonstrations did not inspire all students in the same way. She said that all students were required to attend ELA classes regularly, but some students remained absent during some classes for various reasons and thus found it difficult to find pleasure in reading aloud. She also said that some students joined the school in the middle of academic session, thus

they missed the beginning of the reading course. For example, Balaam came back from Bangladesh in November, and he missed the first three months of reading course. It was the period when she read aloud a lot. She mentioned that the time students spent in ELA classes ranged from a few weeks to several years.

Mary made her students read every day and ensured that students should have access to a wide range of books, such as novels, short stories and poems, in her classroom library. She engaged students in reading for both pleasure and information by choosing reading texts that possessed specific characteristics, such as predictability, familiarity, visuals, natural language, and comprehensible and imaginative texts. She included a large variety of reading and writing activities, such as preparing plot summaries, making story maps, and writing book reviews, so that all students could value themselves as readers and sense the importance of reading. She provided students with positive feedback, adjusting it according to their English language proficiency levels. She frequently motivated students to read texts through their personal perspectives and asked pre-reading questions based on students' academic and cultural backgrounds.

Considering the specific context of my research, I adopted qualitative research methodology. The next sections discuss the research methodology, specific research design, methods of data collection, and process of data analysis I adopted in my study.

3.3. Qualitative Research Methodology

While conducting research in education, researchers apply both qualitative and quantitative study approaches. Researchers' questions and purposes determine their study approaches. With the quantitative approach, researchers remain objective observers and mostly

collect numbers without bringing subjectivity into the research process. However, qualitative approaches require that researchers understand, describe, and analyze research subjects, applying their views supported by previous research findings. Thus, qualitative research findings are mostly describable in words but not clearly represented by numbers.

Merriam (1988) maintains that qualitative research helps us to understand social phenomena through several forms of inquiry without disturbing the natural setting. Thus, qualitative research is more suitable to analyze an issue from different points of view because it allows researchers to interpret situations.

Overall, Merriam (1988), Rothe (1993), and Yin (2003) point out the following characteristics of qualitative research:

- It is an exploratory activity (i.e., it finds out as much information as possible).
- It is descriptive (it describes exploratory information), extensive (because data are collected in natural settings), and explanatory (it explains *why* behind exploratory information).
- Its main research instruments involve human beings.
- It evolves with the progression of a study.
- It leads to a narrowing of focus.
- Its typical data collection methods are questionnaires, observation, and interviews.

I found these characteristics suitable for the nature and topic of my study.

Given the cultural and linguistic diversities among classrooms, teachers, and students, the collection of statistical information and empirical findings would likely not have been the appropriate method for studying an English reading program set up by existing EEC (MEO,

2006). Therefore, to analyze how ELLs react to their English reading program, a qualitative research approach was utilized.

3.4. The Inclusion of Participants

The objective of my study was to develop an in-depth understanding of learning styles of selected individuals, so *purposeful sampling* (Yin, 2003), which is a criterion-based selection, was suitable for my research. I explained the background information, structure, and objectives of the study to the English language teacher. I found her very supportive in providing me with the relevant information about student participants. She suggested four participants on the basis of being high(er) and low(er) achieving students in her ELA classes. Nevertheless, one student participant had to visit Korea with his parents and I had to conduct my study with three student participants. Thus, the inclusion criteria of student participants were as follows:

- The student participants were at the grade five and six levels.
- The student participants had cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English.
- The student participants were recommended by their ELA teacher.
- The teacher recommended students on the basis of their previous achievement in English reading classes.
- Two students with low(er) grades in reading were selected.
- One student with high(er) grades in reading was also selected.

Likewise, the exclusion criteria were:

- I did not include students from other grades to maintain uniformity in my data collection.
- I limited my student sample size to three.

- Since only high(er) and low(er) achieving students having cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English were included, other grade five and six students were excluded.

If more than three participants had been qualified and agreed to participate in the study, I could have included participants from a variety of immigrant language backgrounds as well as a balance of boys and girls. However, I did not have many choices because I had to include ELLs that were high(er) and low(er) achievers. All student participants were sufficiently proficient in English speaking and listening skills, so none required a translator.

3.5. Data Collection Methods

The study utilized qualitative approaches that include questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews.

3.5.1. Questionnaire

Before beginning my classroom observation, it was necessary for me to collect background information (family, social, cultural, and linguistic) on the student participants to categorize them according to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, I designed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to ask the student participants about their biographic and demographic information. Also, I sought information on the student participants' attitudes towards English language learning. The issues covered in this questionnaire were: the student participants' L1s; parental help in their study; duration of stay in Canada; country of origin; application of English language during communication, and reasons for and other details about studying English.

It is widely accepted (Rothe, 1993; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1979; Yin; 2003) that a pilot case study improves data collection plans. Therefore, prior to administering the questionnaire, I

pilot-tested it on four grade 6 students living in the same building, enrolled in different public schools. They had no difficulty in understanding or responding to it. Nevertheless, they had some confusion about Question 16 (see Appendix A) which was originally worded as: "I always finish reading". It was then reworded and clarified as: "if I start reading a book, I always finish it". To answer the questionnaire, students were allotted at least 20 minutes. This time period was sufficient to remove any adverse impact of time constraints.

The student participants were asked to answer 16 multiple choice questions with additional/open category choices, such as *none* and/or *other*. Given the age range (between 11 and 12 years) of the student participants, multiple choice questions were preferred over open-ended questions so their answers would not be affected by their writing proficiency. To examine the internal consistency of answers and reliability of instrument (Appendix A), some identical issues were addressed in different ways: "I read English because..." (# 7); "I enjoy reading English..." (#8); and "I think reading in English is important..." (#10). In addition, space was given on the questionnaire to elicit participants' comments and explanation.

The student participants were allowed to answer the questionnaire in privacy (in the absence of the researcher or the teacher) on the school premises. However, the student participants were also permitted to ask questions or demand explanation from the researcher while they were completing the questionnaire. I read the questionnaire aloud to the student participants and explained the difficult terms for them. After going through the completed questionnaires, I discussed the responses with the student participants to seek explanation on some issues. For instance, "The language(s) in which I mostly get help from my parent/s for doing my homework is/are ..." (#3) does not clarify whether students get help from their father or mother or both. Thus, the questionnaire served two purposes: it provided basic information

about each student participant and it supported the preparation of the next questionnaire (Appendix B), observation plan, and interview questions.

3.5.2. Observation

Yin (2003) mentions that observation is a method for collecting open-ended, firsthand information by studying people and places at a research site. For conducting an observation, he highlights the following points:

- the physical setting
- the participants
- their activities, interaction and conversation
- other less obvious, yet significant factors (e.g., participants' body language)

The classroom observations served two purposes. First, these observations enabled me to study teacher's teaching methods and students participants' performances. Second, observations provided me with complementary data for interviews. Thus, I adopted a role of non-participant observer (Yin, 2003) entering the field, preparing for study, conducting observations, organizing field interviews, and finally leaving the field. I had already introduced myself while handing out the letter of information (see Appendix F). Hence, the relationship between the observer and the observed in this study was explicit because the observer's activities were known to the students.

I noted whether all student participants responded alike or differently to an assigned reading, given their different linguistic abilities and comprehension levels. The student participants' responses helped me analyze the English reading materials, language barriers, and cultural hurdles. I also recorded naturally occurring activities. These included student participants' responses and errors, their learning attitudes and physical reactions to the teacher's

instruction, discussion and conferences among the teacher, the student participants, and their peers, and the teacher's teaching methods and feedback. In addition, I collected data through the Student Questionnaire II (see Appendix B) that added information to the observational details.

While conducting the observations, I encountered some new issues that I had not identified while discussing the literature review and planning the research design. Some of these issues are: Do both high(er) and low(er) achieving students respond to the teacher's questions without hesitation? Do low(er) achievers imitate high(er) ones while expressing their views about readings? Do high(er) achievers always dominate discussion sessions? I used these questions when interviewing the teacher and students.

I conducted 10 observational visits over a period of two months. Based on the research questions, each observation lasted between 90 and 100 minutes. All observations were followed by discussions with the teacher and student participants to seek a better understanding of what I observed. Nevertheless, I did not classify any material until after I collected data from all sources.

3.5.3. Interviews

Given the nature of my study, the participants (the teacher and three student participants) were also *informants* for me. They were participants for me during observation, but they turned into informants during interviews. Yin (2003) observes that semi-structured interviews (standardized format) are the most common type of interviews used in case studies conducted for educational research. I followed interview protocols (see Appendices D and E). The questions mentioned in these appendices provided a guide for the interviews, but they were modified during the course of interviews as needed. Prior to interviews, I re-examined each interviewee's

answers to the questionnaires and my written comments during class observations. This helped me determine each student's attitude towards their assigned readings and several meaningful themes (such as misinterpreting reading) to explore. Hence, I avoided leading (yes-no) and multiple-choice questions, and included interpretive and hypothetical questions to elicit more data from interviewees.

My questions include both general (Do you discuss the reading with other student/s and/or your parent/s? Do you find this reading interesting?) and specific ones (Does this reading make you recall any past incident/s and/or experience/s? Which character/s do you find very familiar?). Similarly, I reviewed student participants' seemingly unusual responses to questionnaires. For instance, one student participant responded to statement # 7 (see Appendix A) "I read English because I like it", but also commented that "not always". Upon asking, the student participant explained during the interview that "some books are boring".

Yin (2003) mentions two responsibilities of interviewers during the interview process:

- follow the line of inquiry, as reflected by case study protocol
- ask actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serve the need of the line of inquiry

Thus, I prepared several questions for the teacher and student participants, but with the progression of interviews, I had to modify some of these questions for different reasons. For instance, interviewees responded to some of the prepared questions before the questions were asked. Sometimes, they interpreted the same question differently and I had to clarify it. Also, I had to ask additional questions to have a clear idea about their statements.

To clarify the data collected, I asked the interviewees (the student participants) to suggest a time and place for interviews. Spradley (1979) maintains that "interviews are influenced by the identity of both parties" (p. 45). Therefore, a comfortable, friendly environment was created at the beginning of each interview, by engaging interviewees in small talk and commenting on their perspectives. For instance, I talked to them about the language barrier and cultural shock issues that I also had experienced during my first year in Canada.

Spradley (1979) maintains that "the key words and phrases jotted down can serve as useful reminders to create the expanded account" (p. 75). Although I took essential short notes and filled in observation scales as per the responses of interviewees, I also focused on interviewees' body language and non-verbal expressions/gestures, such as laughs, pauses, asides and tones. These gestures exposed essential attitudes and concerns of interviewees, despite sometimes not directly connected to the topics of interviews. The utility of these notes confirmed Yin's (2003) statement that respondents should be considered as informants who suggest and inform, not merely respond.

Spradley (1979) argues that "the use of tape recorder may threaten and inhibit informants" (p. 74) when rapport is beginning to develop. Therefore, I did not tape my interviews, and thus no direct quotes of participants are included in the thesis. Furthermore, I interviewed all participants after each observation. To tape these discussions could have made interviewees sensitive and cautious, given their age group. I discussed this issue in detail with Mary, the ELA teacher. She was familiar with the nature of the student participants and she advised me against taping the interviews. Additionally, the student participants belonged to different linguistic backgrounds and possessed different accents, so mere recordings might not have clarified their responses. Also, because of the question format, I expected specific and short answers, so writing

down key words was an easy task. These interview features did not allow the interviewees to stray off topic. Nevertheless, after transcribing interview responses, I showed the written formats to the pertinent interviewees to ensure the precision.

Spradley (1979) maintains that interview depends on the following interpersonal skills.

- asking questions
- listening instead of talking
- taking a passive rather than assertive role
- expressing verbal interest in interviewees
- showing interest by eye contact and other nonverbal means

I remained patient and silent to allow interviewees time to express their points of view at length. Whenever it was required, I prompted them to clarify inadequate responses. No interview lasted more than 15 minutes and I extended thanks to the interviewees for their time.

3.5.4. Archive study

Yin (2003) maintains that archive study helps in conducting case study research, because archives corroborate and augment the pieces of evidence from other sources. With the permission of the teacher, I observed and copied some of her teaching materials, such as lesson plans, class handouts, written instructions, evaluation guidelines, and assignment formats. Also, after getting permission from participant students, I observed and copied some of their writing samples that had been assessed by the teacher. Through reviewing these archives, I was able to see on what areas the teacher focused. This information supported and supplemented the interview process.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Yin (2003), data analysis is a process by which the researcher can uncover meaning from the data. Merriam (1988) observes that qualitative data analysis is an inductive process that proceeds from the particular and detailed data, such as observation notes, to the general and broad codes and themes.

To analyze the collected data, I followed the following steps. First, I converted the collected data, comprised of the questionnaire and interview data, and observational field notes into written formats (Microsoft Word) and saved into my personal computer. I proofread the transcripts and made some grammatical and stylistic modifications to make written formats comprehensible. Then, I reviewed the entire data set for numerous times to verify accuracy and gain a broad sense of the data.

Next, I utilized a combination of two approaches: case study descriptions and cross-case analysis. I applied a case study description method, and each case study was presented independently in details. Then I utilized a cross-case analysis whereby the findings were compared, contrasted, and analyzed. I took into consideration whether students were high(er) and low(er) achievers to reveal several factors pertaining to their reading skills. Also, I identified the teacher's teaching style and methodologies, student participants' practices and performances in ELA classes, and the links between reading texts and student participants' comprehension skills. In addition, I compared and contrasted the teacher's interview data and the field notes of class observations to make connections between the teacher's beliefs and practices. Thus, I classified the data into different themes based on the research questions. After identifying a particular theme in one student interview transcript, I scrutinized other transcripts (e.g., teacher's interview) to see whether there were any similar themes or supporting details. The above-mentioned cross-analysis method helped me determine the precision of data and exclude all other

irrelevant details. Finally, I analyzed how the student participants were faring in ELA classes on the scale of EEC (MEO, 2006) guidelines.

3.7. Validity and Reliability of the Study

Merriam (1988) maintains that a study's validity and reliability can be determined through evaluating its research question/s and methodology. He further proposes that a study's conceptualization, data collection method/s, data analysis and interpretation, and presentation of findings are significant factors in determining its validity and reliability. Therefore, I scrutinized these factors in my study to ensure validity and reliability.

3.7.1. Internal validity

Merriam (1988) argues that the internal validity of a study depends on its findings' *reality,* for example, long term observation. Therefore, the student participants' performances over a two-month period and other significant factors (e.g., engagement during classroom activities) were analyzed to identify possible patterns. Yin (2003) recommends *overlap methods,* i.e., to apply more than one method of data collection and analysis, so that the weaknesses of one method can be covered by the strengths of another. I tried to achieve this overlap effect through triangulating in my data collection. That is, I used questionnaires, observation, and interviews to find out what is common and particular about each case. Questionnaires provided the basic data. Observation supported the collected data and supplemented the interview process. Interviews explored several significant aspects of the collected data in greater detail. Thus, having a variety of data, I checked one type against another one to bring credibility to my conclusion.

In addition, I described in detail my observations and also mentioned the reasons for excluding some data that was irrelevant to the purpose of the study, so that readers can

comprehend this study. Furthermore, I have recorded students' learning activities from one teacher's classroom and compared them with the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) to verify the students' learning activities as useful tools to improve their reading skills. On the basis of actual observation, I presented all my data, including teacher's questions, student participants' responses, teacher's feedback, and student participants' reactions. I have categorized my data and arranged all of my observational findings in a chart based upon what teacher mentioned in her interview. Thus, I have tried to conduct an accurate study of reading activities in a classroom setting.

Finally, Merriam (1988) recommends *member checks* by stating that "taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 169). To increase the validity of the collected data, I did member checks continuously throughout the study. I showed the participants the notes I prepared, which are based on their responses to the questionnaires and their interviews. Thus, they were able to compare and contrast their own views with those in my reports.

3.7.2. Reliability

Merriam (1988) maintains that reliability "refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated" (p. 170). Several researchers argue that reliability is not a significant factor in qualitative research, because replication or reproduction of findings is not possible. Nevertheless, a qualitative research methodology can be consistent, despite a lack of a traditionally defined concept of reliability. Yin (2003) maintains that a qualitative research methodology "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 14). Therefore, to maintain reliability in qualitative research, researchers should explain the

applied assumptions and theories, the methods of data collection and analysis, and the procedure of drawing conclusion.

Thus, qualitative research is significant in observing curriculum implementation and its impact on students, because it helps understand and analyze a situation. It was my responsibility to collect detailed data and develop descriptive analysis, so that other teachers will be able to judge whether such study remains relevant in their classrooms.

Yin (2003) points out that the purpose of reliability is to reduce errors and biases in a study. Hence, to achieve reliability, Yin suggests "to make as many steps as operational as possible and to conduct the research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder" (p.39). Therefore, I followed the teacher's recommendations while selecting student participants and ascertained the impartial inclusion of participants. Coincidently, there was no student participant who shared my cultural and linguistic background. Thus, the data collection and analysis procedures remained unaffected by my cultural and linguistic biases.

Although, I observed ELA classes for only two months, I spent enough time (ten classes) collecting data for my study. In addition, triangulation was achieved by collecting data through a variety of techniques. To achieve reliability of the data analysis process, I sought the opinions of two doctoral students who had worked in the SLA and ESL areas. They looked at the data analysis section and offered their opinions on the process that I adopted.

3.7.3. Strength of study design

The selection of participants was impartial because the ELA teacher suggested the student participants on the basis of their past performances. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data through questionnaires, observations and interviews. Also, the discussion sessions after each

observation provided all participants with opportunities to explain any vague issues that arose during the observation period.

3.8. Ethical Issues

Spradley (1979) mentions the following ethical issues for researchers.

- Protect participants' physical, social and psychological welfare, and honor their dignity and privacy.
- Safeguard participants' rights, interests and sensitivities.
- Communicate participants about research objectives.
- Protect participants' right to remain anonymous.
- Consider the requirements of participants for some gain from the study, though such gain may vary from one participant to the next.
- Make study report available to the participants.

I had several ethical considerations about this study. First, I ascertained informed consent from all participants and I informed them about the details of the study and data collection methods. Second, I preserved privacy and confidentiality of participants' personal information and identity. The collection of personal information was essential to understand the teacher and student participants' perspectives, before analyzing the collected data. However, for the purpose of ethical concerns, I maintained my participants' confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research by providing them with pseudonyms and by excluding any information that could identify their names or locations. They did not write anything on the questionnaires that could identify them as individuals. They were interviewed separately from each other. In the thesis, I only referred to students and the teachers by pseudonyms. Most significantly, I was the only

person in possession of field notes or/and observational charts. No other person had access to any of the data and it was kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

Third, I collected data just after debriefing the study to the participants. There was no significant gap between receiving informed consent from the participants and collecting the data. Hence, the information was not outdated, and fulfilled the ethical issue of informed consent. Fourth, as mentioned in the letter of information (see Appendix F), participation in the study was voluntary and students had the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on their academic status. These precautions were necessary in preventing any pressure that the student participants might have felt while answering questionnaires, attending ELA classes and participating in interviews. For instance, they might have wished to meet the expectations of the researcher or their English teacher.

Fifth, I ascertained the health and safety of my participants. I observed the student participants and teacher's teaching methods without disturbing the participants and teaching-learning process. The facility used during observation was the same classroom that the participants used on a regular basis. In addition, I treated all participants with great respect. Thus, there was no factor of risk or discomfort (physical or mental) for them.

Finally, there was no prior relationship between me and any of the participants, which might have influenced the observation process. Therefore, all possible measures were taken in my study to ascertain the following of ethical guidelines and procedures.

3.9. Summary

In the first section of this chapter, I have presented the academic, social, and cultural background of the teacher and her views on the MEO's (2006) EEC objectives, a home school

bridge, culture shocks, and ESL teaching and learning processes. I have also presented noteworthy aspects of her pedagogical strategies.

In the second section, I have discussed the methodology and methods applied in my study. I have also analyzed the application of qualitative research and case study method that are viewed as useful techniques to study classroom practices. In addition, I have described the triangulation of methods that I applied to collect and analyze the data.

In chapter 4, I present the findings of the study collected through the methodology and methods discussed in this chapter.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present my research findings, beginning with background information on the student participants and their views on relevant issues, such as reading texts. Then, I describe the findings from classroom observations that include information on the teacher's teaching methods, student participation and student-teacher conferences.

Merriam (1988) explains that study findings can be presented in the form of organized descriptive categories that classify the data and each of these categories indicates different analytical levels. Such classification or categorization depends on the nature of the data and the focus of the study. Thus, I have collected the data through questionnaires, observations, and discussions with all three student participants after each observation and interview. However, while presenting the findings, I classify the collected data into two sections: the backgrounds of the student participants and the findings of classroom observations.

4.2. Background Information of the Student Participants

The student participants' family and academic backgrounds and their views on relevant issues are inter-related. For instance, their attitudes towards application of L1 and English are influenced by their family and academic backgrounds. To maintain this flow, all information about student participants collected through questionnaires, discussions, and interviews is presented in their background information section.

4.2.1. Arvada

Macedo, 1987) without realizing its underlying significance. None of the student participants were found to apply metacognitive learning strategies (e.g. monitoring) and revising comprehension to achieve deeper understanding of assigned readings (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gernabacher, 1990; McNamara, 2004; MEO, 2006).

The MEO (2006) states that students should connect assigned readings to their lived experience, other texts and the world. Unlike Balaam and Caviar, Arvada, an independent reader who made reading choices (McNamara, 2004) in a more life-centered way that connected to her cultural capital (Freire & Macedo, 1987), frequently conversed with her parents, peers, and teachers about what she read. Thus, she would express her interest in global problems (Freire & Macedo, 1987), and connect the assigned readings to her experiences. However, Balaam and Caviar, self-centered readers (Freire & Macedo, 1987), skipped supporting details and descriptions mentioned in texts, and spent most of their reading time gathering information to complete reading assignments. Balaam, a reluctant reader with no confidence in his reading skills (Long & Golding, 1993), lacked the required reading experience because the books he had read in Bangladesh discussed different themes and settings than the books he read in Mary's ELA classes. Also, he had missed many independent reading sessions and group discussions, for he did not start school until November. Thus, he lacked Caviar's cooperative reading approach (MEO, 2006) and did not seek out his teacher or peers' views during 'before and after' reading activities to make inferences.

There were, however, some similarities between the student participants with regard to how they achieved the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006). As mentioned in their interviews, they all accepted responsibility (MEO, 2006) for their reading skill improvement. Thus, they seemed to achieve the skill of reflecting on areas for improvement (MEO, 2006) in

reading skills. They also seemed to have acquired the skill of identifying their strengths and weaknesses (MEO, 2006) as readers, and of forming their reading habits (MEO, 2006) to expand their reading skills. They appeared to have obtained the skill of developing a richer vocabulary (MEO, 2006) when they looked for recreational reading materials. They have also obtained the skill of choosing texts of increasing complexity (MEO, 2006) with the development of their reading skills. Moreover, they have learned the skill of utilizing multimedia material (MEO, 2006) related to the different topics that address their personal interests.

In conclusion, the student participants were found to have developed reading skills specified by the MEO (2006), but to different levels. Their achievement of these reading skills was mostly influenced by their academic and socio-cultural backgrounds, though other factors such as the types of ELLs they were, and their level of self-motivation also influenced such development.

5.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have analyzed factors that the student participants considered as influential in their development of English reading comprehension skills, and have also inquired into the challenges these ELLs faced while comprehending the English literacy material in ELA classes. In addition, I have discussed the learning strategies that these ELLs applied to overcome these challenges, and explored the significant themes related to learning strategies and CALP. Lastly, I have discussed how these ELLs acquired the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) in ELA classes.

In the final chapter, I will sum up the research findings by revisiting the purpose of the research and the research questions. Then, I will offer suggestions for administrators, ELA

teachers, ELLs and their parents. I will also discuss the limitations of my study. Finally, I will make recommendation and suggestions for the relevant future studies.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section provides the summary of the findings relating to the research questions. The second section provides recommendations and implications for administrators, ELA teachers, and ELLs and their parents to improve reading practices in ELA classes. The third section discusses the limitations of the study, and also provides suggestions for possible future studies.

This qualitative case study examines the reading comprehension achievements of three student participants from diverse academic and socio-cultural backgrounds in ELA classes, given the reading objectives set by EEC (MEO, 2006). In the following section, I will briefly summarize major findings of my research by referring to the research questions.

6.2. Summary of Major Findings

1. What challenges do ELLs face while trying to comprehend the English literacy material presented in mainstream English Language Arts classes?

An analysis of research findings from the ELA classroom indicates that the main challenges the student participants faced in comprehending the English literacy materials cover external, internal, linguistic and cultural challenges. External challenges include a tendency to read limited genres; internal challenges include negative attitude towards classroom activities, and low academic achievements that cause emotional side effects; linguistic challenges include unfamiliar vocabulary in assigned texts, student participants as well as their parents' limited English speaking skills, student participants' lack of L1 reading skills; cultural challenges

include unfamiliar cultural background information and settings of assigned readings, unfamiliar culture of the classroom, challenging socioeconomic factors, and student participants' negative attitude towards a multilingual, multicultural classroom setting. To overcome these challenges, the student participants applied a variety of learning strategies.

2. What learning strategies do ELLs apply to comprehend English literacy material?

The student participants applied various social and cognitive learning strategies. Social strategies include interacting with peers, and asking questions for clarification. Cognitive strategies include re-reading and skimming reading passages, and enhancing self-motivation for making comprehension. As indicated in Chamot and O'Malley (1994), ELLs use learning strategies to overcome the challenges they face while comprehending English literacy material in ELA classes. The typology of ELLs (Freeman & Freeman, 2008) determines the frequency and kinds of applied learning strategies used (i.e., social, cognitive or metacgnitive strategies). The application of learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994), such as reading and remembering information, and discussing with their native English speaking classmates, appeared effective in developing CALP, but it was also observed that the ELLs required teachers and peers' assistance in using learning strategies. Overall, the application of learning strategies was found significant in achieving the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006).

3. Do ELLs acquire the reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) in ELA classes?

The student participants achieved different sorts of reading skills specified by the MEO (2006) at different levels. These reading skills include collecting information from text, comprehending reading content, thinking critically and creatively while reading, planning and processing reading material, and expressing and organizing ideas. The student participants'

development of these reading skills was mostly influenced by their academic and socio-cultural backgrounds, though other factors (e.g. the types of ELLs that they were, and their level of self-motivation) also influenced the development of reading skills. It was found that the student participants did not develop the ability to apply metacognitive strategies, such as monitoring and revising comprehension, and did not develop a taste for reading materials that reflect the diversity of Canadian and world cultures.

6.3. Recommendations and Implications

Based on the findings of this study, and the SLA literature (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 2003; and Spolsky, 1989), I hereby propose some recommendations for school administrators, ELA teachers, ELLs and their parents for improving reading practices in ELA classes.

6.3.1. Recommendations for school administrators

There exists the possibility that reading materials include topics that run counter to some students' beliefs or values (MEO, 2007). Therefore, administrators should support teachers in exploring ways for ELLs to recognize and talk about these differences (MEO, 2007) by integrating multicultural content into curriculum (Coelho, 2004). This will send the message to the school community that diversity is valuable (Coelho, 2004) and help ELLs develop critical thinking skills.

Reading is a social act (Cummins, 1994), and ELA classrooms may witness much student talk about assigned readings, for students need to practice dialogues to acquire a new language (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). Therefore, administrators should understand that discussion and

dialogue are indicative of social learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994), not poor behaviour.

The EQAO (The Education Quality and Accountability Office) (2009) indicates that nowadays the purpose of assessment has been changed. During the 1970s, assessment was to enable students to comprehend and analyze reading. However, since the 1990s, reading assessment has been used to help students form an initial understanding, interpretation, personal reflection, and critical stance for reading (MEO, 2007). EQAO (2009) also claims that "Principals and teachers are responsible to ensure the fair and consistent administration of the assessments as outlined in the administration guide" (p.3). However, administrators should allow ELA teachers to adjust the selection of reading texts, levels of assignments, and evaluation criteria according to the reading ability of ELLs, without lowering academic expectations. Also, administrators should encourage ELA teachers to write positive home notes to ELL's parents about their children's reading performance (MEO, 2005).

6.3.2. Recommendations for ELA teachers

A single learning strategy cannot be meaningful to all ELLs, given the variation in ELLs' academic, social and cultural backgrounds (Cummins, 2003). Therefore, teachers should plan different learning strategies for different ELLs. These strategies may range from cognitive ones (e.g. comparing and contrasting books), to social ones (e.g. meeting with the teacher to discuss what they liked/ disliked/ found interesting/ did not understand about books) (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). Thus, teachers should create cooperative and supportive learning environments (MEO, 2005) so that ELLs can feel comfortable while applying social strategies (Chamot &

O'Malley, 1994). Such comfort zone may lead them to apply more cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Teachers should collect ELLs' feedback (McKeon, 1994) to be able to modify their teaching practices. The Freemans (2000) suggest that while implementing reading programs, teachers should: (a) observe what different ELLs discuss with other students in the classrooms, (b) explain these discussions to ELLs to broaden their thinking, (c) allow ELLs time and provide teacher support for individual reading, (d) promote ELLs' personal choices while assigning them reading, (e) make it mandatory for all ELLs to write down 'reader's reflections' and share them with other students, and (f) maintain 'reading-discussing-thinking-writing' patterns in all reading classes.

Teachers should consider ELLs as individuals with different identities and backgrounds that may influence their learning process (Cummins, 1994). Some of these may be extroverted, but some may be introverted because of their different cultural capitals and learning experiences. Therefore, teachers should analyze ELLs' responses carefully to understand the diversity in ELLs' cultural capitals. Such understanding will help teachers to teach ELLs how to participate in classroom activities successfully cashing in on a combination of their own cultural capitals, the cultural capital of their multi-lingual peers who are from the different parts of the world, and the cultural capital of the school community that may have a fixed and pre-conceived notion for language teaching (MEO, 2007). Teachers should connect assigned readings to ELLs' academic, social and cultural experiences, so that ELLs can identify assigned readings with their cultural capitals and enjoy readings, realizing the purposes and expectations of texts. ELLs produce quality results if reading assignments meet their real needs (Freeman & Freeman, 2000), but

teachers should realize that these needs may be different for different ELLs depending on their cultural capitals. In this respect, teachers may find out more about the learning styles of ELLs if they listen to their responses during the reading classes (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). In addition, teachers can arrange various fun activities, such as short story telling sessions and narrating personal experiences, to know more about ELLs' cultural capitals. Therefore, in their pre-service courses, teachers should be trained to get familiar with different ELLs' different learning processes, such as application of different learning strategies depending on their cultural capitals. Teachers should be accordingly trained to adapt their instructional program, including their assessment and evaluation strategies for different ELLs. Teachers should be trained to be highly sensitive to the tone of ELLs' responses and comments (McKeon, 1994). Also, teachers should comment on ELLs very carefully. For instance, a teacher jokingly calls 'chicken' to an ELL, but the ELL's cultural capital may make him consider it as a derogatory comment, and develop negative attitude towards teacher's teaching practices. Similarly, an ELL may avoid eye contact with his teacher to pay him respect, but the teacher who is unfamiliar with ELL's cultural capital may consider him disobeying. Therefore, the services of ELLs' parents, local community members, volunteers, interpreters and translators can be used, if available, in teachers' pre-service training to teach them to utilize ELLs' cultural capitals in ELA classes.

Teachers need to close the reading gap between high (er) and low (er) achieving ELLs, though a balance is required between both efferent (information gathered from the text) and aesthetic readings (Gambell, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1991), depending on the purpose and expectations of the text. Difficulty level of texts should also be well balanced: neither too hard to frustrate the reader, nor too easy to bring boredom to the reader (Melton et al., 2004). This is to ensure optimal learning, including improvement of vocabulary and other reading skills. Finally,

teachers should provide low (er) achieving ELLs with appropriate learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Long & Golding, 1993; McNamara, 2004) and reading practices (Gambell, 1986; Langer et al., 1990; MEO, 2005; Pilgreen, 2000; Probst, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1991), when they find their students in difficulty.

6.3.3. Recommendations for ELLs

ELLs should revise their individual understanding of readings in response to their peers' comments (Handscombe, 1994) by drawing on their teachers' guidance to make connections between their prior knowledge and the texts they are reading. Thus, ELLs should realize that they cannot completely rely on themselves to apply learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Long & Golding, 1993; McNamara, 2004), and they should discuss regularly with their ELA teachers. Also, ELLs need to discuss, respond and write without feeling constrained by their pronunciation or grammatical difficulties and should apply suitable learning strategies.

ELLs should initially focus on pleasure reading (Rosenblatt, 1991) and open responses (Probst, 2004) that allow them to express their feelings and opinions, but they should later concentrate on efferent reading (Gambell, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1991) to find specific answers. Also, ELLs may choose reading materials of their interests, but should focus on developing the academic language that they need to succeed in schools (Cummins, 2003).

6.3.4. Recommendations for ELLs' parents

Parents should explain the concept of multicultural settings (Hudelson, 1994) to their children. ELLs learn more in heterogeneous groups that provide them with a variety of cultures, and an increase in the quantity and quality of student talk (Genesee, 1994). Therefore, parents

should spend time listening to their children's reactions, and encourage them to express their views collaboratively in classrooms and communicate with the students from diverse backgrounds (Freeman & Freeman, 2000).

Advances in technology have increased the development of individual learning styles (Cummins, 1994), but parents should also read to their children, encourage them to read in English, take on interest in their assigned readings, and provide them with suitable feedback (MEO, 2007). Otherwise, their children may become passive readers and gradually lose interest in reading (Rosenblatt, 1991). Also, parents may have collected their own evidence of their children' achievements in reading (MEO, 2007) that teachers might have overlooked. Therefore, parents should communicate with ELA teachers frequently to establish a home-school bridge, and to improve their children's scholastic performances (Liu & Taylor, 2004).

6.4. Limitations of the Study

The findings and the intent of my study are not generalizable to all ELLs' learning experiences and their English teachers' teaching styles because I studied only three student participants' learning styles and one teacher participant's teaching methodology. Also, multiple case studies (i.e., observation in more schools) might have provided additional insights. Future studies should focus on ELLs and ELA teachers in different schools.

The purpose of my single case study design was to reflect the richness of factors that may influence ELLs' successful reading comprehension. L2 learning is too complex an issue to allow for cause and effect relationships to be established between variables. My findings resulted from multiple data collection methods. For example, after each classroom observation, I discussed my impressions with all three student and teacher participants to compare our impressions. These

discussions allowed me to cross check observations, impressions and statements, and enabled me to establish links between variables, such as student participants' academic backgrounds and their learning strategies usage.

A two-month observation period (December-February) was another limitation of the study. It would have been more helpful to begin my field investigation from the beginning of the school year to find out the students participants' level of reading comprehension in the initial stage of their reading activities. In addition, a five-month long (October-February) observational period may have provided more comprehensive data. However, my data collection process was delayed due to such reasons as the school board's grant of access and Balaam's arrival in November. Nevertheless, I had a chance to collect my data set during a two-month period in which time I observed diverse ELA reading activities. I was able to collect enough data to compare and contrast the performances of all student participants, despite external factors such as Balaam's late arrival.

Finally, the data collected through my classroom observation may be affected by my cultural bias, but the possibility of such bias was minimized in the sense that no student participants shared my cultural background. Although I tried to limit my subjectivity by developing thick descriptions and holistic observations of classroom activities, my previous teaching experience in India and understanding of issues related to ELLs likely influenced my findings. Therefore, after recording each observation, I verified the recorded findings by discussing them with all the research participants. I also analyzed the data on the scale of broad themes, such as the MEO (2006) reading objectives.

6.5. Suggestions for Future Research

First, this study was conducted over a period of two months. It would be interesting to conduct a parallel study longitudinally over two or more years. Second, the student participants in this study were of South-East Asian and Middle East origins. Future studies may include ELLs from other geographic origins. Furthermore, although all the three student participants were ELLs, many students attending ELA classes were English natives. It would be interesting to observe ELLs in the ELA classes where a majority of the students are ELLs to observe the role of comfort level in making English readings comprehensible. Future studies may observe the achievements of native English-speaking students in ELA classes, and compare and contrast high (er) and low (er) achieving students' approaches towards English readings. That may explain what other qualities apart from language proficiency students require to comprehend the assigned readings.

Other changes to the present design could include observing which strategies ELLs apply to improve their writing skills because all student participants in the present study are low (er) achievers in English writing, and focusing on older ELLs because this study examines the comprehension strategies applied by the student participants from grades 5 and 6. The students were guided by the ELA teacher who provided them with tools like story map in their use of comprehension strategies. Future studies with ELLs from higher grades could highlight their self-guided comprehension strategies. Besides, this study was conducted in an ELA class taught by a native English-speaking teacher. It would be interesting to compare my results to studies in which non-native English speaking teachers instruct ELA classes. Also, in future studies, it would be useful to video record observation to highlight links between the student participants' class behaviors and their reading comprehension performances.

Finally, my study includes only one newly arrived immigrant student. Future studies may include four or five newly arrived immigrant students from different geographic origins and also adopt multiple case study approach. Such longitudinal study design may highlight more comprehensively the role of cultural capital and use of learning strategies in making readings comprehensible.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire I

Note: Please complete the following statements by circling best answers and/or inserting words into the spaces.

1. The language/s I speak at home is/are:
   (a) English
   (b) Other(s) .....
   (c) Mixture ..... and .....
2. The language(s) in which we mostly watch TV programs at home is/are:
   (a) English
   (b) Other(s) .....
   (c) Both, English and other(s)
   (d) None (e.g., we do not watch TV)
3. The language(s) in which I mostly get help from my parent/s for doing my homework is/are:
   (a) English
   (b) Other(s) .....
   (c) Both, English and other(s)
   (d) None (I do not get help from my parents.)
4. I have lived in Canada for:
   (a) Less than three year
   (b) Between three and five years
   (c) More than five years
5. My country of origin is/are:
   (a) Canada
   (b) Other
   (c) I also lived in .....
6. The language(s) in which I mostly speak to my neighbor is/are:
   (a) English
   (b) Other(s) .....
   (c) Both English and other(s)
   (d) None (e.g., I do not speak to my neighbours)
7. I read English because:
   (a) it is a compulsory subject
   (b) it is a useful language
   (c) I like it
   (d) Other (please, explain) .....
8. I enjoy reading English.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
   (c) Other (please, explain) .....
9. My favorite English author(s) is/are:

(a) .....
(b) None (I do not have a favorite author.)

10. I think reading in English is important.
    (a) Yes
    (b) No
    (c) Other (please, explain) .....
11. I first learned English in:
    (a) Canada
    (b) Other.....
12. When I started learning English, I was:
    (a) Younger than six years old
    (b) Older than six
13. I think speaking English allows me to make many friends.
    (a) Yes
    (b) No
    (c) Other (please, explain).....
14. I pay special attention towards English pronunciation while reading.
    (a) Yes
    (b) No
    (c) Other (please, explain).....
15. I like to read the following types of books in English: (You may choose more than one option.)
    (a) Stories
    (b) Biographies
    (c) Science Fiction
    (d) Picture Books
    (e) Historical Novels
    (f) Other.....
16. If I start reading a book, I always finish it.
    (a) Yes
    (b) No
    (c) Other (please, explain).....

Appendix B

Student Questionnaire II

Note: Please complete the following statements by circling best answers and/or inserting words into the spaces.

1. I do the following activity(ies) at home based on the reading we did in English Language Arts: (You may choose more than one option).

(a) Re-reading the chapter or the pages read in class that day

(b) Search for the meaning of difficult or new words in the dictionary

(c) Read related articles and information

(d) Discuss the reading with my parent(s), other family member(s), or friend(s)

(e) Read aloud

(f) Other (please, explain).....

2. I found this reading: (Please circle the number for each option that best represents your opinion for the scales provided.)

(a) interesting	1	2	3	4	5	boring
(b) familiar	1	2	3	4	5	unfamiliar
(c) easy	1	2	3	4	5	difficult

3. The story we are reading now in class made me think of an incident that: (You may choose more than one option.)

(a) related to my personal experiences.

(b) my family member(s) and/or relative(s) told me about.

(c) I read somewhere.

(d) The topic of the reading was completely unfamiliar to me.

4. If you did not answer "c" to Number 3 above, skip Number 4 and 5.

If you did answer "c" to Number 3 above, please complete the following:

The story we are reading now in class made me think of an incident that I read about in...

(a) a book

(b) the newspaper

(c) a magazine

5. The following parts of the story were familiar: (You may choose more than one option.)

(a) plot (story)

(b) name(s) of the character(s)

(c) the character or characters' way(s) of behaviour, talking or thinking

(d) the setting and background

(e) the language and the method of description

(f) the theme or topic

Appendix C

Observation Table: Mary's Pedagogical Strategies & Student Participants' Involvement

TEACHING STATEGIES	ARVADA	BALLAM	CAVIAR	COMMENTS
supply relevant cultural information				
refresh learner's pre-acquired ideas about text				
activate learner's background knowledge				
motivate students by asking pre-reading questions				
explanation of difficult parts				
model to illustrate concepts				
discuss topic to activate ideas				
teacher-student dialogue on one-to-one basis				
conversation and discussion				
use of picture and images				
ask questions to monitor student understanding				
summarize section orally				
point out key information				
synthesize ideas to broaden understanding				
group discussion				
explain theme-related ideas				
cite relevant TV programs or magazine articles				
identify both stated and implied ideas				
connect ideas in texts to students' own knowledge, experiences, etc.				
compare students' perspective to that of the characters				
explain how the different elements of a novel contribute meaning and influence student reactions				
find the author's voice and other possible perspectives				
identify the point of view in the text				

Appendix D

Student Interview Questions

1. Would you have selected this book if you had been able to choose your own text?
2. Did you have enough time to finish the reading you did in English Language Arts today?
3. Does re-reading make you understand what you read more?
4. Would you like to do grammar exercises instead of reading?
5. Do you lose interest in reading English if the topic is very familiar to you?
6. What do you think about the villains in the reading (if there were any)?
7. Did you understand life in a new way as a result of reading this text?
8. Could text have been written differently to make it more interesting?
9. What additional material would you like to read about this text? (e. g., historical or literary background)
10. If you were a reading teacher, what do you think your main role would be during classroom discussions?
11. What happens if students ask the teacher to explain something during reading period? How do other students react? (Discuss).
12. How do you feel when you ask your teacher to explain something during reading period?
13. Do you use any strategies when you are reading? That is, do you look up every new word or try to understand the meaning from the overall context? (Discuss).
14. What sort of learning activities do you prefer: group work, talking about something one-on-one with the teacher or a classmate? (Discuss).

Follow-up Questions

1. Tell me about the text you read in the language arts class. Are you familiar with the characters you read today? How?

2. Are there any passages in the text that you liked? Why do you like them?

3. What do you like most about the book you are reading in language arts class right now? What do you not like about the book you are reading?

4. Tell me about some of the sentences you remember from the text you read today. What do they make you think of?

5. What are your favorite activities in language arts class?

6. Do you ever discuss what you read in language arts class outside of the classroom, like in chat rooms with friends? Do you identify any advantage of such discussion?

7. What do you like best about your language arts class?

8. Do you have any questions for me about today's assignment? Can I clarify anything about this assignment?

9. What issues does the rereading of the text raise in your mind?

10. How does the familiarity with the background of this text affect your reading comprehension? How does the unfamiliarity with the background of some texts affect your reading comprehension?

11. What do you think about the assignment for this poem?

12. Would you like to do the 'label reading' exercise again? Why or why not?

13. Are there other learning strategies, such as translation in your L1, which you would like to use in your language arts class?

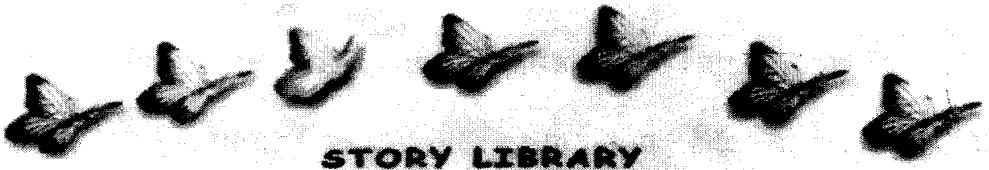
14. Do you think the different strategies, such as discussion and rereading, you apply in the language arts class to comprehend the assigned texts help you? How? Do you have any question or suggestion for me about these strategies?

Appendix E

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Would you have liked reading this book when you were your students' age? (Discuss giving reasons).
2. Do you think the students all had enough time to finish the reading?
3. Does re-reading a text help students understand it better?
4. Would you like to assign grammar exercises to the students instead of reading?
5. Do students lose interest in reading English if the topic is very familiar to them?
6. Does it make any impact on students if there are villains in the story?
7. Do you think students will understand life in a new way as a result of reading this text?
8. Could this text have been written differently to make it more interesting?
9. Which additional reading could you suggest that your students read so they understand this text better?
10. Which role do you adopt during discussion session?
11. What happens if students ask for clarification during reading period? How do their peers react? (Discuss).
12. Do you think all the students feel comfortable enough to ask you for further explanation during reading period?
13. What strategies do you suggest that your students use when they are reading? (Discuss).
14. What types of activities do you do with your students (e.g., group work, talking the work over with you or a peer one-on-one)?

Appendix F



STORY LIBRARY

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

There once was a shepherd boy who was bored as he sat on the hillside watching the village sheep. To amuse himself he took a great breath and sang out, "Wolf! Wolf! The Wolf is chasing the sheep!"

The villagers came running up the hill to help the boy drive the wolf away. But when they arrived at the top of the hill, they found no wolf. The boy laughed at the sight of their angry faces.

"Don't cry 'wolf', shepherd boy," said the villagers, "when there's no wolf!" They went grumbling back down the hill.

Later, the boy sang out again, "Wolf! Wolf! The wolf is chasing the sheep!" To his naughty delight, he watched the villagers run up the hill to help him drive the wolf away.

When the villagers saw no wolf they sternly said, "Save your frightened song for when there is really something wrong! Don't cry 'wolf' when there is NO wolf!"

But the boy just grinned and watched them go grumbling down the hill once more.

Later, he saw a REAL wolf prowling about his flock. Alarmed, he leaped to his feet and sang out as loudly as he could, "Wolf! Wolf!"

But the villagers thought he was trying to fool them again, and so they didn't come.

At sunset, everyone wondered why the shepherd boy hadn't returned to the village with their sheep. They went up the hill to find the boy. They found him weeping.

"There really was a wolf here! The flock has scattered! I cried out, "Wolf!" Why didn't you come?"

An old man tried to comfort the boy as they walked back to the village.

"We'll help you look for the lost sheep in the morning," he said, putting his arm around the youth, "Nobody believes a liar...even when he is telling the truth!"

Appendix G

'Umbrella' is a story written and illustrated by Taro Yashima.

Momo is a three year old girl. On her third birthday, she receives many gifts, including an umbrella and red rubber boots. She wants to use these gifts instantly, though the gifts are meant for the rainy season.

Throughout the summer, Momo tries every opportunity to use the boots and umbrella. For instance, on several occasions, she complains that the extremely bright sunshine bothers her eyes, so she wants to protect her eyes by using umbrella. Also, She makes the same excuse about the fast wind that strikes her face.

However, identifying her real intention, her parents tell her repeatedly that the umbrella must be kept for a rainy day. Hence, Momo has to wait for a rainy day. Finally, she gets a chance to use her boots and umbrella on the first rainy day of the season. She carries her umbrella to her school. Her mother is with her but she walks alone, without holding her her mother's hand. However, she demonstrates her growing maturity by walking straight, like an elder person, on the crowded and noisy street.

Momo is so impatient that she does not stop to wipe her face that is smeared with water. She does not tell her mother to clean her face. Also, when boots come out of her feet, she pulls them onto her bare feet again. She does not expect her mother to adjust her boots for her.

She has habit of forgetting her mittens or scarf at the school and her father has to remind her to collect the things. However, she responsibly recollects her umbrella that day when her father comes to take her at home.

Therefore, the opportunity to use umbrella teaches her many lessons and makes her a more responsible girl. Therefore, the opportunity to use umbrella teaches her many lessons and makes her a more responsible girl.

Appendix H

The Tulip Fairies

Once upon a time there was a good old woman who lived in a little house. She had in her garden a bed of beautif striped tulips.

One night she was wakened by the sounds of sweet singing and of babies laughing. She looked out at the window The sounds seemed to come from the tulip bed, but she could see nothing.

The next morning she walked among her flowers, but there were no signs of any one having been there the night before.

On the following night she was again wakened by sweet singing and babies laughing. She rose and stole softly through her garden. The moon was shining brightly on the tulip bed, and the flowers were swaying to and fro. Th old woman looked closely and she saw, standing by each tulip, a little Fairy mother who was crooning and rocki the flower like a cradle, while in each tulip-cup lay a little Fairy baby laughing and playing.

The good old woman stole quietly back to her house, and from that time on she never picked a tulip, nor did she allow her neighbors to touch the flowers.

The tulips grew daily brighter in color and larger in size, and they gave out a delicious perfume like that of roses. They began, too, to bloom all the year round. And every night the little Fairy mothers caressed their babies and rocked them to sleep in the flower-cups.

The day came when the good old woman died, and the tulip-bed was torn up by folks who did not know about th Fairies, and parsley was planted there instead of the flowers. But the parsley withered, and so did all the other plants in the garden, and from that time nothing would grow there.

But the good old woman's grave grew beautiful, for the Fairies sang above it, and kept it green; while on the gr and all around it there sprang up tulips, daffodils, and violets, and other lovely flowers of spring.

Appendix I

An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

Vikar A. Qureshi (M. Ed. student; Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario)

LETTER OF INFORMATION

for Students

Introduction

My name is *Vikar A. Qureshi* and I am an *M. Ed. student* at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into English reading in multicultural classrooms and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to see how you and other English language learners fare in English reading instruction during Language Arts periods in your regular classroom.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to fill out two brief questionnaires and be interviewed by me. The questionnaires will take about 15 minutes to complete, and the interview will take about 20 minutes, and you will do both of them at school during regular school hours. I will also spend some time observing you in your classroom while I help your teacher during English Language Arts period. Your classmates will not be aware that I am interested in any student in particular. I would also like to speak to your English Language Arts teacher to discuss your English level and how you are faring in the program.

Confidentiality

The information that I collect will only be used for research purposes, and neither your name nor any information that could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for this study will be kept confidential. Your name will never appear in my thesis as I will give you a 'false name'. After five years, I will destroy the notes that I take during your

interview and in my classroom observations. Until then, I will keep my notes in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Dr. Shelley Taylor

Vikar Ahemad Qureshi

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

[Signature]

An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

Vikar A. Qureshi (M. Ed. student; Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario)

PARENT/GUARDIAN & CHILD CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree that my child may participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name of child (please print):

Signature of Child:

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print):

Signature: Date

Appendix J

An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

Vikar A. Qureshi (M. Ed. student; Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario)

LETTER OF INFORMATION

for the Teacher

Introduction

My name is *Vikar A. Qureshi* and I am an *M. Ed. student* at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into English reading in multicultural classrooms and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to see how English language learners fare in English reading instruction during Language Arts period.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to spend approximately 10 weeks conducting participant-observation in your English Language Arts classes. That will allow me to observe the children who participate in the study without drawing attention to them. I will also observe your pedagogical strategies during reading classes. With their parents' permission, I would also like to interview you about children participating in the study to find about their English level and how they are faring in Language Arts overall. This will take half an hour to an hour. We can meet in your classroom, in a convenient location after school (e.g., at a donut shop), or discuss this on the phone.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. I will refer to you in all reports by a pseudonym. After five years, I will destroy the notes that I take during your interview and in my classroom observations. Until then, I will keep my notes in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study. However, there may be benefits. For example, you may see second language reading differently as a result of participation in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Dr. Shelley Taylor

Vikar Ahemad Qureshi; mobile

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

[Signature]

An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

Vikar A. Qureshi (M. Ed. student; Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario)

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature: Date:

Appendix K

APPROVAL OF MEd THESIS PROPOSAL **FORM A**

If the proposed research does not involve human subjects or the direct use of their written records, video-tapes, recordings, tests, etc., this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal should be delivered directly to the Office of Graduate Programs & Research for final approval.	If the proposed research involves human subjects, this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal and THREE copies of the Ethical Review Form must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Programs & Research for final approval.

IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A COPY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL (INCLUDING REVISIONS) TO THE THESIS SUPERVISOR AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Student's Name: VIKAR AHEMAD QURESHI

Field of Study: Curriculum

TITLE OF THESIS: An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

DOES THIS RESEARCH INVOLVE THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS: **YES**

Name of Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Shelley Taylor
Name of Thesis Co-supervisor: Dr. Farahnaz Faez
Name(s) of Members of the
Thesis Advisory Committee: Dr. Brian Way

APPROVAL:

Graduate Student: Vikar Ahemad Qureshi

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Shelley Taylor
Thesis Co-supervisor: Dr. Farahnaz Faez
Advisory Committee: Dr. Brian Way

Ethical Review Clearance: Karen Kueneman
Review #: 0809-2 Date: Sep 29, 2008

Associate Dean GPR: Dr. Robert Macmillan Date: Sep 30, 2008

A STUDENT MAY PROCEED WITH RESEARCH WHEN A COPY OF THIS FORM CONTAINING ALL APPROVAL SIGNATURES HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

A COPY OF THIS PROPOSAL MAY BE MADE PUBLIC AND KEPT ON A TWO-HOUR RESERVE IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION LIBRARY.

Appendix L: Ethics Approval Form

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 0809-2
Applicant: Vikar Qureshi
Supervisor: Shelley Taylor
Title: An Investigation into the Challenges Facing ELLs in Ontario's Multilingual English Language Arts Classrooms

Expiry Date: March 31, 2009
Type: M.Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date: September 29, 2008
Documents Reviewed & Approved: UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.
No deviations from, or changes to, the research project as described in this protocol may be initiated without prior written approval, except for minor administrative aspects. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information and consent documentation, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Jason Brown (Chair)

2008-2009 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Jason Brown	**Faculty (Chair)**
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	**Faculty**
Dr. Jacqueline Specht	**Faculty**
Dr. John Barnett	**Faculty**
Dr. J. Marshall Mangan	**Faculty**
Dr. Immaculate Namukasa	**Faculty**
Dr. Robert Macmillan	**Assoc Dean, Graduate Programs & Research (ex officio)**
Dr. Jerry Paquette	**UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (ex officio)**

The Faculty of Education
1137 Western Rd.
London, ON N6G 1G7

Karen Kueneman, Research Officer
Faculty of Education Building