Community-based learning in teacher education: Toward a situated understanding of ESL learners

by

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B.A., University of Calgary, 1999
M.Ed., University of Calgary, 2003

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Abstract

Twenty percent of Canadians do not speak English as their first language. This is the highest reported proportion of non-native English speakers to comprise Canada's national demographic in 75 years (Statistics Canada, 2011). Factoring into Canada's classrooms, this demographic contrasts sharply with a public school professoriate comprised mainly of white middle class females (Bascia, 1996; Cone, 2009; Cooper, 2007; Gambhir, Broad, Evans, Gaskell, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2002). The resulting gap that exists culturally and linguistically between many of Canada's teachers and many of Canada's most vulnerable students is cause for concern, especially in regards to the low level of achievement many ESL students experience in the classroom (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Despite a discourse steeped in advocacy and empowerment, there is little agreement on how to most effectively prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse learners (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2001). There is however, a general consensus that preservice teachers need experience working with diverse populations in order to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to assist minority students to reach their full potential (Goodlad, 1990; Phillion; Malewski, Sharma & Wang, 2009).

My research attempted to address these gaps by investigating how incorporating community-based learning (Dallimore, Rochefort & Simonelli, 2010) into a teacher education course informed preservice teachers' understandings of ESL learners, their lives, and ultimately, the pedagogical approaches necessary to most effectively support them. Subjugating the needs and perspectives of community members in community-university partnerships is a criticism recycled throughout the discourse on community-based engagement (Bortolin, 2011; Giles & Cruz, 2000; Howard, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). For this reason, this research sought to pay particular attention to the principles of reciprocity in community engagement, as well as how community partners experienced the partnership.

Data was collected from students, community partners, and the instructor and analyzed using a qualitative, open-coding approach to inform a holistic understanding of how all participants experienced the project, how community members could be incorporated as co-educators in a teacher education course, and how assumptions of student participants were challenged. The findings suggest a number of advantages to participants in participating in a community-based learning experience, ways to improve the design and implementation of community-based courses, and recommendations for future research. These directions include assessing and challenging existing attitudes and assumptions about ESL learners by practicing teachers by looking at projects that bring community partners and school-based practitioners together to encourage reflection on these attitudes and assumptions.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father,
Francis Maguire
Go raibh maith agat

Chapter 1: Introduction

Twenty percent of Canadians do not speak English as their first language. This is the highest reported proportion of non-native English speakers to comprise Canada's national demographic in 75 years (Statistics Canada, 2011). Factoring into Canada's classrooms, this evolving demographic contrasts sharply with a public school professoriate comprised mainly of white middle class females (Bascia, 1996; Cone, 2009; Cooper, 2007; Gambhir, Broad, Evans, Gaskell, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2002). The resulting gap that exists culturally and linguistically between many of Canada's teachers and many of Canada's most vulnerable students is cause for concern, especially in regards to the low level of achievement many ESL students experience in our classrooms (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Despite providing a discourse steeped in advocacy and empowerment, there is little agreement on how to most effectively prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse learners (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Indeed, many proponents of improving ESL pedagogy fail to bridge the gap between theory and practice by not offering practical suggestions on how educators are to structure their teaching approaches for ESL learners. There is however, a general consensus that preservice teachers need experience working with diverse populations in order to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to assist minority students to reach their full potential (Goodlad, 1990; Phillion, Malewski, Sharma & Wang, 2009). In order to prepare student teachers to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse students, educational researchers continue to acknowledge the gaps that exist between teachers and students and between theory and practice, and to conceive of ways to address these gaps.

My research attempted to address these gaps by investigating how incorporating community-based learning into a teacher education course informed preservice teachers' understandings of ESL learners, their lives, and ultimately, the pedagogical approaches necessary to most effectively support them. I premised this study on my belief that community-based coursework might provide a bridge between the theory and the practice of teaching English as a second language. I therefore investigated how designing and facilitating a community-based course encouraged preservice teachers to engage in a variety of community environments that were relevant to the cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds of second language learners. I thought that preservice teachers needed such a place-based experience in order for them to gain understanding and insight into how to teach ESL. By designing, implementing and reflecting on this course, I was able to investigate this pedagogy from within, and at the same time work toward challenging assumptions about second language classrooms and a burgeoning ESL demographic.

Coming to this project

I came to this research project in response to the tension I experienced teaching an ESL course to preservice teachers in a university classroom environment. As a sessional instructor, I came together with my students—preservice teachers—twice a week to engage in readings, reflective journals, and epiphanies into the world of ESL. At the time, I believed my instructional approach was inspired by a Freire-ian "we're in it together" sort of philosophy. However, I began to note there was something not so Freire-ian about a group of predominantly white middle class university students and a white middle class instructor discussing ESL learners theoretically, in between stolen glances at text messages and sips of

designer Americanos. To me, the course lacked authenticity. I began to think that somewhere else, outside the classroom walls were places, people and stories that could inform my teaching, my own knowledge, and the knowledge and understandings of the students in my course. Furthermore, I began to think these places, people and stories could potentially affect my students in powerful and transformative ways that would go far beyond the objectives of our course. I became inspired to find a way to meaningfully connect future teachers with their future ESL students in order to improve understandings of ESL pedagogy. For this reason my research examined how taking preservice teachers out of the university classroom and connecting them with the community had the potential to raise a critical awareness of ESL learners, challenge existing assumptions, and give a more situated perspective on the communities and resources available to ESL learners.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study was to use action research methods to investigate how I, the instructor, implemented a community-based teacher education course. In this study, I collected, analyzed and represented the perspectives of participating students, community members, and myself in regards to our participation in a community-based course. These perspectives were sought in order to provide an overview of how community-based learning could be implemented and experienced in a teacher education context. Furthermore, this study sought to gain insight into how community-based learning could potentially disrupt or challenge preservice teachers' assumptions concerning ESL learners and ESL teaching. Ultimately, I was concerned with studying, from a variety of perspectives, the effects of community-based learning partnerships on understandings related to ESL teaching and

learning, but also on understandings of including community-based pedagogies in teacher education programs.

The research questions

This research was guided by the following four research questions:

- What does the process of designing and delivering a community-based teacher education course in ESL teaching methods look like?
- How do students, instructors, and community organizations experience participating in a community-based teacher education course?
- In what ways can a community-based learning experience potentially disrupt preservice teachers' assumptions of ESL learners and inform their emerging understandings of ESL pedagogy?
- How can the community participate as co-educators in teacher education programs?

The pedagogy

In this study, I investigated my process of designing and implementing a community-based course in teacher education, and the perspectives of community members and preservice teachers engaging with that pedagogy. Community-based learning (CBL), as it is used in this study, is a situated pedagogy that engages faculty, community members and students in partnerships in order to meet academic and community goals (Dallimore, Rochefort & Simonelli, 2010). In the context of teacher education, CBL provides preservice teachers with opportunities to engage in communities they may have not had access to or experience in (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). In this way, CBL is a fusion of theory and practice, integrating course-based objectives with community-based needs.

A recent study by Nicholas, Baker-Sennett, McClanahan and Harwood (2012) illustrates how community-based learning was applied to a teacher education course. The authors of this

study describe how preservice teachers worked with community members and human service professionals on a number of collaborative inquiry projects. As part of the course, preservice teachers came together with community partners to design, analyze and conduct surveys and interviews related to community-specific research questions. The study found that preservice teachers who participated in these research-oriented partnerships developed skills related to inquiry and collaboration, as well as increased understandings of the communities in which they were working. The authors argue that community-based inquiry courses such as this provide preservice teachers with skills that will help make them more effective teachers, able to use data to improve student learning, as well as connect with the real issues facing the communities in which they will one day be teaching.

The methodology

In undertaking this research, I used an action research methodology (Armstrong & Moore, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Lewin, 1948; McNiff & Whitehead, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2006), and was influenced by aspects of participatory action research (PAR) and community-based research (CBR). Action research describes a method of qualitative inquiry that is done by, or with, insiders of an organization or community in order to address practical concerns relevant to those particular social groups or communities (Armstrong & Moore, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2006;). Specifically within education contexts, action research is often undertaken by an instructor in order to understand or improve their teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kitchen & Stevens, 2008; McFarland & Stansell, 1993). Since I was seeking to investigate how a community-based pedagogy was implemented and experienced, action research was an

appropriate fit for this study. Furthermore, in investigating how participants engaged with this pedagogy, I applied Lewin's cyclical process, progressing through steps such as reconnaissance, data collection, data analysis, and hypotheses that inform practice (Noffke & Somekh, 2011). In chapter three, I explore more deeply this methodology and its connection to my research objectives, providing a rationale for why these methods were a meaningful fit for guiding my study.

The research design

Building on a pilot course I taught in 2010, I used this research opportunity to implement and assess a community-based teacher education course in an undergraduate education program. Unlike school-based practica, community-based learning offers preservice teachers a different environment from which to gain perspective on ESL students. Finding opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in dialogical and interactive partnerships with real ESL communities, not abstract textbooks or other "experts," community-based teaching links course-based objectives with meaningful engagement in the community (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Furthermore, community-based learning encourages preservice teachers to step outside their own life experiences, see children as community members, regard communities as educational resources, and adapt learning to a child's life experiences (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000). This research investigated this process of community-based teaching and learning, and sought to study deeply the ways in which this pedagogy can potentially bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps between Canada's public school classrooms and its growing ESL student demographic.

To carry out this research, I initiated partnerships with a number of relevant and local community groups that expressed interest in participating in this project. These groups included non-profit organizations, immigrant support groups, immigrant youth groups, immigrant and refugee support workers, and the parents of ESL students. I began by using semi-structured interviews with these groups, eliciting from them how they envisioned a partnership between themselves and the students participating in the project, encouraging them to shape the project based on their own expertise and interests (Stoecker, 2003; Puma, Bennet, Cutforth, Tombari & Stein, 2009). Data was also collected from participating students regarding their assumptions about ESL learners and ESL pedagogy. To collect this data, I used semi-structured interviews and course-based assignments such as reflective journals, group discussions, and response papers. After collecting this data, I analyzed it using an open-coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), identifying prominent themes to determine the ways in which the community-based engagement informed teachers' understanding of ESL pedagogy and how it challenged previously-held assumptions about ESL learners and ESL pedagogy.

Significance of the research

At the heart of this project was a concern for improving the quality of instruction for a growing ESL population, and informing a body of professionals—our school teachers—of the reality of the ESL experience from a community perspective. Given the knowledge of the academic and cultural challenges that ESL learners face in the classroom (Roessingh, Kover & Watt, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 1997), I believed that an innovative pedagogical intervention like community-based learning might contribute to preservice teachers' understanding of and interaction with ESL learners. Ultimately, I was looking for a method that might affect change

and increase ESL learners' academic success. I also believed this study could potentially inform the emerging area of community-based teaching and learning in higher education, especially in the Canadian context. In order to become more engaged with the communities in which they are situated, institutions of higher education, not just teacher education programs, are considering ways to incorporate more practical, place-based, and community-focused content into their programs (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco & Swanson, 2012). I hoped this research project could contribute to this area by providing an example of how community-based learning can be incorporated into a higher education context. Furthermore, I believed it could instruct educators of the process, the challenges, and the advantages of such an approach. For these reasons, I believed this research project and its results would have the potential to affect and inform ESL pedagogy, teacher education, higher education, and community-based groups connected to ESL issues and policy.

Positioning myself

When I entered my PhD program, I was passionate about working to improve the quality of instruction at the post-secondary level. I was keen to make a difference in the lives of university students by helping faculty improve their teaching. Having experienced mediocre instruction during my undergraduate degree, but inspiring instruction during my graduate degree in education, I became motivated to spread the word and change the world, and I was quite sure that I could, somehow, raise interest and ability in teaching more effectively in the post-secondary context. I was accepted into a PhD program and was eager to let everyone know what I was going to do. When I told a friend who happened to be a professor that I was interested in "faculty improvement," she looked at me incredulously and replied, "Best of luck,

because no one really cares about teaching at university." Her efforts to knock the wind out of me would be replicated by many other, already established post-secondary instructors. In these early stages, I felt a bit silly, like a child hanging on to the belief in the tooth fairy while the all-knowing older children condescendingly explained the truth. Would my efforts be met with disinterest? Wouldn't those instructors interested in improving their teaching just find a way to do it, regardless of me? And even though I knew I wanted to make a change, how was I going to do that, especially if *no one really cared about teaching at university?*

Around the same time, I took a course on education and social justice. The course inspired a feeling of dissonance; I had chosen a rather elitist context—the university—in which to make a change. Up until this point, I, a privileged PhD student, had been passionate about helping the privileged university student by also helping the privileged university instructor. Was I just another cog in the establishment, working to make the already privileged lives of university students and university instructors even better? Wouldn't my position be put to better use if I actually tried to make a difference outside of the rosy, comfy glow of the university? So I tried to bring it all together—the university instructor, the students, the community, and ultimately ESL students. I believed that I could use my position as privileged university student and instructor to investigate a pedagogical style that seeks to empower students and communities by linking course-based objectives with meaningful engagement in the community (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Through community-based learning, I intended to study how to create partnerships in learning that go beyond the boundaries of university classrooms, and that encourage a more equitable sharing of the resources and knowledge that exist in universities and communities.

I am passionate about community-based learning. Based on my experiences, I believe it has the potential to encourage transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1978) by deepening a learner's consciousness as they construct and reconstruct the meaning of learning experiences (Dirkx, 2012). Consistent with Dirkx (2012), I use transformative learning to describe a self-formative process in which learners struggle to understand various aspects of themselves and their world, by engaging with ideas, practices and people, that can at times result in abrupt shifts in consciousness (p.404). I believe that this deepening consciousness and shift in understanding can emerge as students engage in non-traditional learning spaces. Community-based learning has the potential to situate learners in environments that they may not otherwise have access to, and these environments have the potential to inform understandings in an experiential, situated, and embodied way that may be impossible to achieve in a classroom alone. I had not, however, used community-based methods before. But I wanted to try. For these reasons, I designed a course to investigate this pedagogy, and to provide me with a place to experiment with it, as an instructor and as a researcher. Furthermore, I designed this project in order to write about community-based learning, and hopefully inspire further interest in and engagement with this particular approach to teaching and learning.

For all of these reasons, I acknowledge my subjectivity in this research process. It is my interest in this pedagogy and my assumptions about its potential that encouraged me to design and pursue this research project. Furthermore, I was the instructor in the course that I used as the basis of this research project, which further situated me in the study and deepened the subjectivity that I bring to this project. Subjectivity is an integral part of the qualitative, critical

tradition (Hays & Singh, 2002; Patton, 2002; Peshkin, 1988) from which I write In this study I embrace this subjectivity and the role it has played in all aspects of the research process from first conceiving of the project to analysing the data to interpreting and representing that data. During all of these stages, *I* have been present and have been participating as an instructor, researcher and participant observer in order to construct this thesis.

Throughout this project, I was a student, a researcher, and an instructor. Clearly, I was deeply involved in this research, and passionate about how it would evolve. In acknowledging this complicated and embedded position as invested researcher-instructor, I intended to make it clear that I was never removed from this project, but rather very much a part of it. However, I believe that my place and my passion were necessary in order for this study to be undertaken. Without such an interest in community-based teaching and learning and its potential to grow and shape teacher education programs and communities, I would not have designed this course. I would not have taught it. And ultimately I would not have researched and written about it. It is my interest and passion about community-based pedagogies that has brought me to this place.

Worldview

My worldview is heavily influenced by the critical paradigm. I believe universities are traditionally privileged institutions that often create knowledge primarily for the benefit of their own members. I believe this imbalance of knowledge construction and sharing to be an example of a historic, economic, and social infrastructure of injustice, and therefore consistent with Guba and Lincoln's (2000) ideas of a critical foundational perspective. By investigating an example of community-based pedagogy, I wanted to explore the notion that more equitable

exchanges between universities and communities are possible and can empower both the learner and the community.

According to Guba and Lincoln (2000), the critical paradigm is concerned with empowerment and social transformation as the "call to action" of research. With this "call to action" framing my worldview, I hoped to investigate how the idea of empowerment inherent to community-based learning resulted in social transformation by having learners engaging with the community and becoming more aware of community issues and the ways in which those issues can be addressed. In addition to a critical perspective, I am ontologically connected to a constructivist paradigm; I believe truths are constructed, co-constructed, and validated through negotiation and dialogue of relevant communities (Guba & Lincoln, 2000, p.204). I saw the participants of this research project as integral to my research, and that the knowledge I collected, analyzed, and disseminated would be impossible without their collaboration and input.

Conclusion

Discussions of educational strategies related to addressing the needs of a growing culturally and linguistically diverse public school demographic continue to penetrate contemporary educational discourses in Canada (Swartz, 2009; Wang, Spalding, Odell, Klecka & Lin, 2010), encouraging educators to consider deeply the ways in which we are meeting the educational demands of our minority learners. Well-intentioned educational theorists have established the need to identify second language learners as a resource rather than a deficit (Cummins, 2001; Lee & Anderson, 2009; Putney, 2007). However, as Hernandez Sheets (2003) points out, it will take more than theory to educate preservice teachers to effectively teach in

diverse, multicultural settings. Inspired by this discourse on the lack of theory-based practice, and the gap it presents, I structured this research project to develop and implement a community-based course in a teacher education program. I wanted to investigate how preservice teachers might construct knowledge and understanding by interacting meaningfully in communities that may differ from their own but that would be relevant to the lives of their future students (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Furthermore, I undertook this research in order to experience community-based learning experiences as an instructor. I felt that my existing classroom-based approaches were somewhat ineffectual and inauthentic, and wanted to experiment with a different approach—a pedagogy that would help deepen understandings and connect my students with the community in a meaningful way.

I also wanted to write about my process. When I became interested in using community-based experiences as part of the course, I could not find many resources documenting other instructors' approaches. I found myself wanting to read other accounts of designing community-based courses—how did other instructors do it, what steps did they take, what mistakes did they make? There were few such resources available, and so I wanted to contribute my own story and my own process. I hope that this research informs other instructors interested in designing and implementing community-based courses. I hope that the data presented here will inform my research questions by illustrating how community-based teaching and learning were experienced, how the community can be incorporated as co-educators in teacher education, and how assumptions can be critically challenged by moving beyond the campus.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Within the field of teaching English as a second language (TESL), the very agents charged with serving ESL learners often produce assumptions that create damaging and hegemonic understandings (Ajayi, 2011; English, 2009; Kubota, 1999; Zamel, 1997). These understandings are shaped by teachers, researchers, teacher educators, and even students themselves, and often conceptualize ESL learners as deficits rather than resources in the classroom (Beykont, 2002; Cummins, 2001; Lee & Anderson, Swartz, 2009; Wang, Spalding, Odell, Klecka & Lin, 2010). There are a variety of ways in which these deficit understandings are created and reinforced in the classroom including through cultural assumptions, language use, teacher education programs, and school-based ESL policies. Here I suggest that teacher educators concerned with how to best serve ESL students need to analyze carefully and reflect critically on the assumptions intrinsic to the TESL field in order to find ways to disrupt damaging assumptions and to encourage future teachers to do the same.

One way to address how we construct understandings of ESL learners is to pay attention to how, or if at all, teacher education programs acknowledge and challenge these understandings. One method to potentially disrupt these assumptions is through community-based learning (CBL). CBL, as it is used here, is a situated pedagogy that engages faculty, community members and students in partnerships in order to meet academic and community goals (Dallimore, Rochefort & Simonelli, 2010), and that provides preservice teachers with opportunities to engage in communities they may have not had access to or experience in (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Community-based learning has the potential to disrupt the

traditional classroom model of teacher education programs, and the assumptions embedded within. In doing so, preservice teachers are encouraged to engage in a situated form of critical consciousness (McGregor, Sanford, Clover & Krawetz, 2008). This critical consciousness is achieved through relational and dialogical interaction in communities that are relevant to the lives of students and that exist beyond traditional and limiting pedagogical environments like the classroom. Furthermore, structured reflections on these experiences can help preservice teachers identify and challenge their own biases (Friedman, 2002; Mezirow, 1997).

In this chapter, I first discuss some traditional ways of thinking about ESL learners and learning, and then problematize these dominant approaches to ESL teaching and learning. I suggest CBL as a potential way to disrupt these traditional approaches and challenge the cultural assumptions that continue to dichotomize ESL learners in educational contexts. By exploring community-based learning more deeply, I attempt to provide a rationale for incorporating CBL into a teacher education course in teaching ESL. In this way I focus this literature review both on the pedagogy that I sought to investigate in this study (CBL), and on some of the reasons I believed it necessary to incorporate it in a preservice education course on teaching ESL. Of course there are numerous other areas related to linguistics, university-community partnerships, and teacher education that are not included here. Instead, I choose to focus deeply on the pedagogy and my main rationale for choosing it.

Constructing Understandings of ESL learners

At times, even those who are committed to teaching English as a second language (TESL) can unwittingly create and reinforce damaging assumptions about ESL learners (Ajayi, 2011; English, 2009; Kubota, 1999; Zamel, 1997). These agents construct second language learners in a variety of ways including essentializing or polarizing cultures; using language that marginalizes certain groups, or what is referred to as *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson & Rannut, 1995); marginalizing ESL content and issues of diversity in teacher education programs; and implementing school-based policies that segregate ESL learners and encourage deficit understandings of learners who are linguistically and culturally different from the mainstream. In what follows I explore some of the ways understandings of ESL learners are constructed through discourse and practice, and reflect critically on the implications of these understandings for preservice teachers, teacher educators and ESL learners themselves.

Assumptions embedded in dichotomizing cultures

Cultural assumptions are prevalent in TESL literature, sometimes linked directly with pedagogical strategies, and exemplify one way in which understandings of ESL learners are created in the TESL field. For example, Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996) provided the following observation when discussing the implications of college level writing texts on the ESL learner:

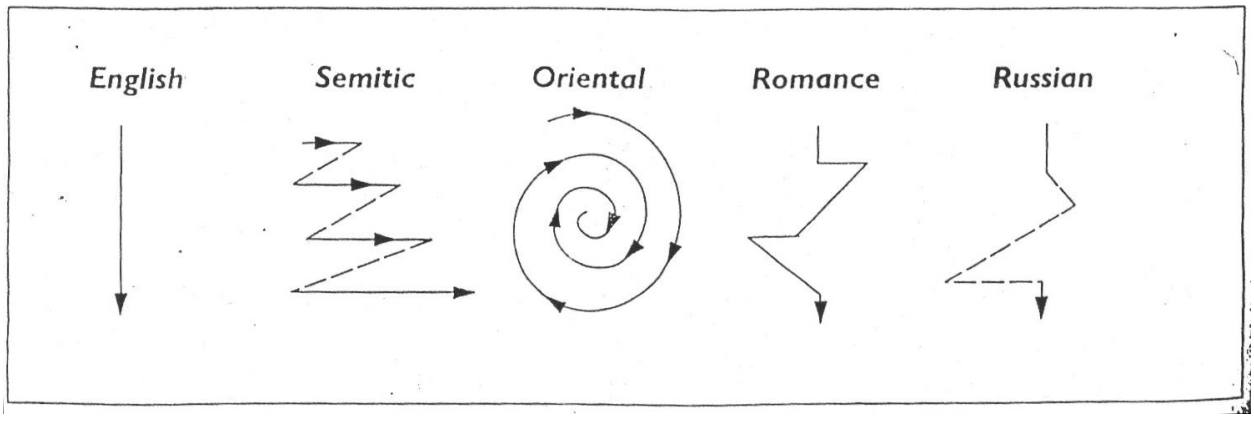
> The cultural mainstream in the U.S. places high value on [critical thinking] skills, but such is not necessarily the case in other cultures. Many Chinese, who are, to some extent, Confucian in their outlook may be likely to lay greater store by Confucian sayings to support their views than they do by what the North American academic mainstream considers viable "evidence" (p.27).

Kaplan, a theorist in the field of applied linguistics, and his co-author Ramanathan illustrate with this quote a problematic approach to teaching the ESL learner—that of conceiving of a

learner who is constrained by what are described as cultural shortcomings. Although Kaplan and Ramanathan's ideas intend to encourage more cultural sensitivity among writing teachers, they also reduce the complexity of ESL learners' experiences to a deterministic stance and deficit orientation as to what students can accomplish (Zamel, 1997).

Ideas such as these are fostered by much of the discourse that emerges from the field of contrastive rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric is a field of study that looks at how a person's first language and culture influences their acquisition of a second language (Kassabgy, Ibrahim & Aydelott, 2004). Contrastive rhetoric involves examining the similarities and differences in writing across cultures, and attempts to explain problems encountered by second language writers by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language (Connor, 1996). Contrastive rhetoric, and its proponents, have been criticized for oversimplifying cultural differences and promoting western thinking and writing style as superior. (Kubota, 2001; Scollon,1997; Spack, 1997). For example, Kaplan (1966) used the following diagram (see Figure 1) to represent how text is produced based on different cultural thought patterns.

Figure 1. Patterns of written discourse (Kaplan, 1966, p.14).



Diagrams such as this and the work that has evolved from it has led critics to problematize the simplistic and hegemonic understandings that emerge from applying contrastive rhetoric to ESL learners. For example, Kubota and Lehner (2004) argue that despite "a well-meaning effort to facilitate second language learning, contrastive rhetoric has tended to construct static homogenous, and apolitical images of the rhetorical patterns of various written languages" (p. 9). In this example, we see the ways in which the discourse on TESL, articulated by prominent theorists in the field of applied linguistics, produces simplistic and generalized understandings of ESL learners.

Ramathan and Kaplan, like some ESL educators and theorists, can unwittingly dichotomize the cultures of ESL learners and thereby contribute to an image of a learner who is culturally different and, often times, culturally subordinate to the mainstream culture. Kubota (2001) argues that dichotomizing cultural differences is part of the legacy of colonial discourse; by exploiting cultural differences individuals justify certain ways of thinking and certain relations of power. For example, in teaching ESL learners writing skills, instructors often choose topics that encourage students to compare and contrast aspects of their culture with aspects of the mainstream culture. Activities such as this work to polarize concepts of cultures, outlining one culture against the other, and therefore functions as a form of Othering (Kubota, 2001; Harklau, 1999).

Kubota (1999) also criticized studies that attempt to demystify the cultural background of ESL learners, particularly those from Asia. These studies often dichotomize cultural values, suggesting that Western culture encourages self-expression, creativity and critical thinking,

whereas Eastern cultures value collectivism, harmony and memorization (Kubota, 1999). Simplifying cultures in this way is captured well in the aforementioned quote by Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996). What is problematic in this approach is assuming that all members of a culture think in culturally determined ways, and that learners can occupy only one stereotyped way of knowing and learning. Furthermore, essentializing culture in this way often implies a subordinate position of the Other, and an idealized and dominant position of the self (Shin & Kubota, 2010). In this way, focusing on the differences between cultures often works to reinforce cultural dominance over members of other cultures, such as ESL learners. Conceptualizing cultures in this way results in subtle yet prevalent understandings of ESL learners as cultural subordinates. Clearly, the implications of such thinking are dangerous. Critics like Kubota (1999, 2001, 2010), Spack, (1997) and Zamel, 1997 problematize contrastive rhetoric by calling attention to the troubling hegemonic implications of many assertions embedded in studies in contrastive rhetoric. Like these critics, teacher educators and emerging teachers need opportunities to discuss and challenge ideas like Kaplan's 1966 diagram, and other problematic and hegemonic ways in which ESL learners are understood and taught.

Assumptions embedded in the language of TESL

The above section illustrates some ways that ESL learners are understood based on cultural assumptions that dichotomize and position ESL learners differentially from the dominant culture. Because these assumptions are revealed in the language of theorists and educators, it becomes important to look at other ways in which language constructs meaning, especially in regards to ESL learners. Gaining momentum within the social sciences is the idea that language is more than simply a reflection of reality; it constitutes reality (Phillips & Hardy;

2002; Winch, 1958; Wittgenstein, 1967). According to Gee (1990), Discourse (with a capital D) refers to how language is more than just language, and how the use of language signifies a way of thinking, feeling, acting and believing that connects the communicator to a social group or role. Furthermore, these Discourses are ideological, resistant to internal scrutiny, and have an inherent power to marginalize the viewpoints of other Discourses, and to create and maintain the way that social power is distributed among different Discourse groups (Gee, 1990). Furthermore, by analyzing discourse from the perspective of a postmodern and poststructural epistemology, analysts look at more than just syntax and semantics; they look at how texts have been constructed in terms of their social and historical context (Cheek, 2004). Related to this constructivist approach, critical discourse analysis is concerned with how text can enact, reproduce, and resist abuse of power, dominance and inequalities in society (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Ehernberger Hamilton, 2003). For all of these reasons, exploring how language constructs understandings is essential in determining the ways in which ESL learners are understood in the field of TESL.

Constructing ESL learners as cultural subordinates is demonstrated in what Lui (1999) calls linguistic imperialism. Lui problematizes the use of labels such as *native* and *non-native* speaker and argues that such terms dichotomize and reinforce majority-minority relationships and understandings. Lui further argues that the use of such labels is "power driven, identity laden, and confidence affecting" (p. 86). Labelling ESL learners is also challenged by Spack (1997) when she illustrates how these labels situate learners in positions of subordination. For example, Spack calls our attention to TESOL, the acronym used to denote the field, as well as the main administrative organization that unites it. TESOL stands for *Teachers of English to*

Speakers of Other Languages. What Spack is concerned with is the term *other,* used to refer, of course, to languages *other* than English. English, therefore, becomes the norm against which other languages are measured, elevating its status above *others*. In much the same way, many other labels in the field of TESL including *native speakers, non-native speakers*, *foreign, limited English proficient,* and *mainstream* work to assert English language and its cultural connections as the dominant, and thereby subjugate all others to a lesser position.

Talmy (2004) elaborates on the use of such labels, calling them a form of linguicism. Linguicism describes how marginalized groups are socially constructed so that their resources such as language and culture become invisible or are seen as handicaps (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson & Rannut, 1995). In this process, the resources of the majority group take on a higher, more dominant position and are turned into resources of power. Talmy argues that the labeling of ESL learners by institutions, but also by fellow students (e.g., FOB or *fresh off the boat*) creates a hegemonic and deficient-oriented process of Othering of ESL learners. Because of labeling, schools become primary sites for this subtle yet sophisticated form of racism (Talmy, 2004). In this way, language can be seen as a means of constructing ESL learners as deficient members within the dominant culture, a construction with connections to the hegemony of Western colonialism.

Indeed, it is impossible to discuss hegemonic Othering, both cultural and linguistic, without reference to colonialism. In the past two centuries, British colonialism has shaped world history, producing understandings of superiority and inferiority between colonizers and the colonized, and resulting in the spread of English as a global language (Pennycock, 1998).

Indeed, promoting English and teaching English were tools of the Empire for imperial expansion and control, and therefore a construct of power in and of itself. Furthermore, the spread of English and English language teaching forces a pedagogical and social culture onto its learners because of the invariable connections that exist between language and culture (Cubukcu, 2010). However, because ways of knowing differ from culture to culture, the pedagogy of English created and continues to create a hegemonic pedagogy that subjugates the pedagogy of other cultures (Cubukcu, 2010). For this reason, teacher educators must acknowledge that language has been used traditionally as a tool for colonial control, and that control was often played out through teaching and learning. This legacy continues, and results in producing damaging assumptions about the self and the Other. Just as the connections between language and culture are impossible to tease apart, so too are the connections between language and teaching, especially given colonial history. To discuss how ESL learners are constructed pedagogically, I turn now to the assumptions embedded within teacher education programs.

Assumptions embedded in teacher education programs

Critiques of the shortcomings of teacher education programs consistently draw attention to a variety of problems that inhibit preservice teachers from gaining meaningful and effective strategies for teaching English to English language learners. One such critic, Hernandez Sheets (2004) articulates these insufficiencies in the following way:

> While we currently may have the potential to inspire, we have not consistently demonstrated the capacity to educate a professoriate who can prepare preservice candidates to succeed in diverse settings, nor have we developed reliable and replicable teacher preparation programs that understand how to select programmatic content, experiences and strategies needed to help teachers develop from novice to expert levels and to apply cultural and language dimensions to curriculum and practice (p. 163).

In this quote, Hernandez Sheets hints at the disconnect between theory and practice in teacher education programs, and suggests that teacher educators need to incorporate more cultural content into their programs. Hernandez Sheets is not alone in her suggestion, as many advocates for improving diversity-based instruction in teacher education programs cite a lack of cross-cultural content as a troubling and prevalent shortcoming within teacher education programs (Burbank, Bates & Ramirez, 2012; Gonzales & Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Tedick & Walker, 1994). Critics of these shortcomings suggest that many teacher education programs fail to address the interconnectedness between first and second languages and cultures; fragment and isolate language teaching and language learning; offer a narrow and deconstructed view of language; overemphasize instructional methods and de-emphasize issues of culture; and fail to address the relationship between language and culture (Gonzales & Darling-Hammond, 2000). These critics draw attention to the omission of cultural content in teacher education programs. If and when teacher educators fail to address the role that culture plays in second language teaching and learning, and in teaching in general, they ignore the importance of culture in our ESL learners. In this way, teacher educators risk constructing a two-dimensional image of a learner who is void of a cultural dimension, or whose cultural dimension is less important than their basic linguistic needs.

In discussing the assumptions created by teacher education programs, and how these assumptions influence how ESL learners are understood, it becomes necessary to shift toward how teacher education programs are also affected by the policies and administration of teacher educators within school districts. Beardsmore (2008) articulates clear challenges within British Columbia's system for certifying and hiring ESL specialists with the province. In her study,

Beardsmore found that despite having an *ESL specialist* designation, British Columbia had no certification process for ESL specialists. Furthermore, the hiring requirements for qualified ESL specialists across the province were not standard, and the hiring process was not monitored. Beardsmore also provides evidence that suggests that existing ESL specialist practitioners sometimes have no ESL education, or have qualifications that focus on methodology rather than cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. Indeed, a survey of the University of Victoria's contribution to ESL teacher education finds one course offered, as an elective, in which cross-cultural issues comprise only part of the course, often sandwiched between second language acquisition and ESL teaching methods.

How do the shortcomings of teacher education programs, and the related ambiguity of certifying and hiring ESL specialists, influence how ESL learners are understood in an education context? First of all, by offering limited TESL or multicultural-based courses, or offering them as electives only (as was the case for the TESL course used in this study) teacher education programs send a message that teaching English as a second language and understanding cross-cultural issues is just an option to fill one's elective requirements. This shortcoming refuses to acknowledge the evolving demographic of our schools, one that is seeing twenty percent of its school-aged population speaking a first language other than English (Statistics Canada, 2011). Understanding how to teach TESL, and incorporating cross-cultural understandings into classroom practice should not be optional, relegated to electives, or left up to individual instructors as to how this content may or may not be part of a course they teach. Scant direction in the certification requirements and hiring practices of ESL teachers in British Columbia reinforces the idea that ESL learners do not require, or perhaps deserve, quality ESL

instructors as much as senior-ranked teachers deserve an ESL-specialist designation. In these ways, teacher education programs and designation granting agencies pay little or no attention to ESL learners, almost assuming that they do not exist at all.

Assumptions embedded within school-based practice and policy

Assumptions about ESL learners are sometimes created by well-intentioned but misguided school-based practices. One significant practice is that of pull-out programs. Pull-out programs are popular adjunct support options in which ESL learners are pulled out of their mainstream classroom and work with ESL specialists to address particular language issues. These pull-out programs often provide fractured instruction, inconsistent with the instruction and objectives of mainstream classes, and segregate ESL learners from the mainstream classroom (Dudley-Marling & Murphy, 1997; Mohr, 2004; Virginia, 1992). Furthermore, despite the good intentions of pull-out programs, they do not appear to be effectively fostering better language proficiency (Mohr, 2004; Slavin & Calderon, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1997). One serious side-effect of pull-out programs is that classroom teachers might not see themselves as primarily responsible for the academic progress of their students (Dudley-Marling & Murphy, 1997; Mohr, 2004). In this way, pull-out programs reinforce the assumption that ESL learners are deficient and must be isolated from the mainstream and made better through fractured, random language instruction for one to two hours a week.

The power of intersecting and overlapping deficit discourses

The aforementioned assumptions inherent in the language, cultural treatment, and educational programming related to ESL learners, work together to construct an abstract and damaging image of the very learners the TESL field aims to serve. This construction ignores

deeper, more corporeal aspects of the young ESL people in our classrooms. Such assumptions need to be articulated, reflected upon and used as a motivating force to find ways to disrupt such two-dimensional ways of thinking. Teachers and teacher educators need to challenge traditional methods and theories, and find alternative routes to deepen the awareness of our emerging teachers in order to inform them of the deeper cultural and personal identities unique to every ESL learner they will meet in their educational careers. The following section of this chapter looks at potential ways to disrupt or challenge assumptions.

Disrupting assumptions through community-based learning

Clearly, assumptions about ESL learners exist and are perpetuated in discourses, texts, policies and concepts of culture. Acknowledging these ways in which ESL learners are constructed is essential in teacher education programs, but is by far not enough. Teacher education programs concerned with preparing future teachers to work within increasingly diverse classrooms must find ways to challenge these assumptions, particularly because of their damaging and hegemonic nature. One method that has the potential to challenge previously held notions of ESL learners, and reconstruct more relevant and authentic understandings is community-based learning.

What is community-based learning and how is it used in this study?

Community-based learning (CBL) is broadly defined and far-reaching in its scope. Generally, CBL is a situated pedagogy that engages faculty, community members and students in partnerships in order to meet academic and community goals (Dallimore, Rochefort & Simonelli, 2010), and that provides preservice teachers with opportunities to engage in

communities they may have not had access to or experience in (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Furthermore, it is a form of learning that integrates classroom-based material and objectives with real-life experiences in the community. In this way, CBL is a fusion of theory and practice, integrating classroom models of learning with experiential community-based activities. However, how this integration is configured can vary considerably. For example, practica, co-op placements, internships, and field trips could fall under the umbrella of CBL. Furthermore, depending on the context and objectives of a particular CBL project, related terms such as *place-based education*, *service learning*, *experiential learning*, and *community-based research* (CBR) are sometimes used interchangeably or in conjunction with CBL. Because of CBL's potential to be so broadly applied, it is important for researchers and writers who engage in CBL to define clearly what they mean by, and how they are applying, the term *community-based learning*.

Unlike *place-based education*, the term community-based learning carries with it a nuanced understanding of reciprocity and social justice. Unlike internships and practica, community-based teaching and learning assumes that the community is a partner in learning, and collaborates on the process in order to achieve its own goals, whatever those may be. Implicit to my usage of the term is the understanding that the community shapes the project from the onset through consultation and collaboration. The student, the instructor, and the university are not simply going to a place to take away knowledge and resources; rather they are going to engage in a partnership in learning in which both partners have needs and goals that are being addressed through the project.

Other terms related to CBL carry with them nuanced and embedded understandings that may not be applicable to the community-based process I intend to develop. For example, *place-based education* is rooted in environmental education, and pays specific attention to the natural world (Smith, 2007). However, place-based education has been criticized for its emphasis on the ecological and the rural and in effect often neglects or displaces socio-cultural aspects of learning (Gruenewald, 2003). For this reason, *place-based education* is too narrowly defined a term to use here since both the social and the cultural are inherent to my pedagogy and my research project, and rooted firmly in my pedagogical and epistemological perspective.

Another CBL term is *service learning* or *community service learning.* Service learning is defined as:

> …a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

For the purposes of this study, however, I felt that there would be opportunities for students to engage in the community without necessarily providing a service, and that various types of engagement may be welcomed by the community over particular service options. Furthermore, I suggest that service-less engagement in the community still has the potential to meet the needs of the community, as well as the needs of students.

For these reasons, I embrace the term community-based learning. I apply it here to mean engagement in the community in a variety of ways that are determined by the needs and objectives of that community, and that supplements in a meaningful and experiential way

course-based objectives. CBL's connection to community service learning and social justice appealed to me as an instructor teaching a diversity-based course. I saw CBL as a way to encourage preservice teachers to move toward reflective practice by encouraging them to analyze their experiences and assumptions as they relate to the emerging roles and identities of new teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Furthermore, CBL's connection to social justice made sense when considering how ESL learners in our communities are often marginalized, as this chapter has shown, even by educators and agents charged with serving their educational needs. I began to understand CBL as a pedagogy that could connect future educators with the communities in which ESL learners are situated and potentially prompt critical inquiries about inequality, racism and power (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; O'Grady & Chappell, 2000). It is with all of these understandings of CBL in mind that I continue my discussion below of how CBL can disrupt previously held assumptions of ESL learners.

The community perspective

Embedded in the values of CBL are community-centered ideas related to collaboration, reciprocity, social change, and empowerment (Stoecker, 2003). Despite these community-focused principles, the discourse on community-based learning has been criticized for its focus on community engagement in terms of its value to students rather than its value to communities (Bortolin, 2011; Giles & Cruz, 2000; Howard, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). As Stoeker and Tryon point out, disregarding the community perspective in community-engaged scholarship has the potential to create dialectical processes that undermine the entire effort of community-based learning. Indeed, advocates of community-based engagement suggest a need for knowledge to be co-

created *with*, rather than *for* the community (d'Arlach, Sanchez & Feuer, 2009). Scholars committed to community-based learning, therefore, must ask themselves if they are privileging themselves over the community, not only in their discourse but in their approach to campus-community initiatives; and if so, what they will do about it, both in terms of their engagement and their discourse, given that privileging themselves is antithetical to the stated core principles of collaboration and reciprocity. The dearth of research related to the community in community-based engagement has even led Stoecker and Tryon (2009) to recently question, "Who is served by service learning (p.1)?" By choosing to research students, their perspectives, and their outcomes, rather than the community's perspectives and outcomes, researchers are no doubt privileging themselves and the university over the community. Additionally, when the discourse represents the university as the active agent, and the community as the passive recipient, scholars validate Stoecker and Tryon's (2009) concerns about who in fact we are serving, not only through community service learning, but through the discourses we create to disseminate findings and grow the field. For this reason, the community perspective was sought throughout all stages of this research project, alongside the perspectives of student participants and the instructor.

What is the community?

What then is meant by *the community*? In this study, community is conceptualized as people and places that exist beyond a traditional understanding of the university environment—its classrooms and its campus. The community in this community-based learning initiative was identified as schools, social service agencies, businesses, government agencies, neighbourhood organizations, community members, and parents. Furthermore, the

definition of community used here also acknowledges and includes groups of people that do not necessarily share a geographical or institutional association but share an interest in cultural, social, political, or economic issues (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Community-based learning seeks to connect students to resources that exist beyond the university environment, opening up learning opportunities and providing place-based experiences from which students can gain insight into course-based content and objectives, and where relevant community members and organizations can share expertise and shape relevant understandings. This study focused on identifying people and places in the community that were connected to the interests of young ESL learners. These people and places include non-profit organizations; immigrant youth groups; immigrant support groups; settlement workers; government ESL coordinators; ESL specialists; and parents of ESL students.

Situating preservice teachers in the lived experience of their students

One way in which CBL could challenge understandings of teacher educators about ESL learners is in its ability to connect preservice teachers to the lived experience of their students. By situating preservice teachers in relevant communities, CBL can add a corporeal dimension to pre-existing abstract notions of ESL learners, notions that are manifested often in the limiting two-dimensional world of university textbooks and classrooms. CBL creates opportunities that locate preservice teachers inside communities where they can learn about local conditions and concerns. At the same time CBL can introduce children as members of families and cultural groups with a wide range of interests (Boyle-Baise, 2002). In this way, CBL initiatives complement school-based practica that focus on more methodological issues but that may

gloss over, omit, or misconstruct the role that community plays on all learners, but specifically on ESL learners whose communities may differ from those of preservice teachers.

Indeed, many researchers are acknowledging that increasingly diverse classroom demographics are not reflected in the predominantly white, middle class, female demographic of preservice elementary teachers (Cone, 2009; Cooper, 2007; Hodgkinson, 2002; Wade, 2000). A typically homogenous group of educators such as this invariably needs issues of diversity and cross-cultural awareness addressed in teacher education programs. CBL can be used to inform an awareness of cultural diversity and assist preservice teachers in seeing students as cultural beings situated in communities other than their own, and who by existing in these communities have strengths and resources that need to be experienced (Cooper, 2007). A community-based pedagogical model allows preservice teachers to step outside their own life experiences, see children as community members, regard communities as educational resources, and adapt learning to children's life experiences (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Sleeter, 2000).

One way to address how we construct ESL learners is to pay attention to how, or if at all, teacher education programs acknowledge and challenge these constructions. One method of potentially disrupting these assumptions is to connect preservice teachers with their future students by situating them in relevant community contexts (Capatano, 2010; Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Community-based learning (CBL) is a situated pedagogy that locates preservice teachers relationally and dialogically in environments relevant to ESL learners. By moving outside of university classrooms and outside of ubiquitous school-based practica, preservice teachers and their educators are able to connect with community members, parents, organizations and resources that offer a different, more local perspective, and have the ability

to inform and re/construct understandings of ESL learners. Furthermore, by facilitating ways for preservice teachers to reflect on their experiences, teacher educators may be able to encourage the disruption of negative or challenging assumptions (Mezirow, 1997). This research project is prefaced through a literature review that first acknowledges the ways in which ESL learners are constructed and then suggests CBL as a way to challenge such assumptions.

Clearly, CBL gives preservice teachers opportunities to deepen their awareness of the socio-cultural dimension of communities that perhaps differ from their own, but that shape and affect their learners. CBL encourages this awareness to be experienced relationally and experientially in order to supplement more limiting and often abstract classroom-based learning experiences.

Focusing on resources and empowerment

Community-based learning opportunities can also provide experiences that inform preservice teachers about the strengths and resources of the communities of their students. By focusing on resources, rather than differences and deficits, well-structured community-based opportunities can empower community members as participants in teacher education (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000). For parents and communities who often feel distanced from schools, community-based learning projects that include them and their voices can offer opportunities for community members and teachers to work together to understand the various educational environments relevant to ESL learners, such as home and school.

Furthermore, for teacher educators and preservice teachers, involvement in real-life, everyday circumstances characterized by cultural diversity and inequity can encourage

preservice teachers to critically question issues of race, culture, and power (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000). Whether or not CBL opportunities are structured with specific emphasis on the relationship between dominant and non-dominant race and culture, they offer teacher educators and preservice teachers the possibility to question such assumptions through the power of situated learning. And this potential to question such concepts helps to define CBL as a type of critical pedagogy.

CBL as critical pedagogy

As a form of situated critical pedagogy, CBL has the potential to help teachers contextualize marginalized communities within systems of unequal power, which provides an alternative to the cultural deficiency understanding many teachers have about marginalized communities (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 1998). Indeed, CBL has the potential to address the themes of diversity and empowerment that underscore models of educational reform that aim to be both inclusive and equitable (Cummins, 2001; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Swartz, 2009).

In their arguments, these theorists appeal to educators to move from a hegemonic understanding that second language learners are a deficit, toward an empowering understanding that these learners are a resource in our classrooms. Swartz (2009), for example, establishes that the dominant discourse on diversity is a discourse that positions difference as deficit. She furthers this argument by encouraging educators to "affirm the collective humanity of all students-teachers-families and the cultures and groups they represent" (p.1044). In much the same way, Cummins (2001) establishes the problematic nature of a discourse of deficit when he asserts that by choosing to frame the discourse of underachievement in terms of children's deficits, educators ignore the culture, language, and

identity of children. Cummins then illustrates the emancipatory qualities of a curricular model that encourages educators to acknowledge the cultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources that children bring to school.

All of these theorists claim that educators need to look beyond traditional solutions in order to evoke real and meaningful change. These educational theorists are establishing a strong theoretical base for reconceptualising minority learners as a resource rather than a deficit, and CBL appears to be one very practical way to challenge and restructure our assumptions about ESL learners.

Alternative approaches to disrupting assumptions

Situating preservice teachers and teacher educators in relevant community settings through CBL initiatives has the potential to challenge and shape assumptions about ESL learners. But CBL is only one way to encourage educators to reflect on their previous notions in order to articulate emerging understandings of the cultural and linguistic diversity of ESL learners. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, acknowledging the differences between predominantly white middle class preservice teachers and the growing diversity of elementary classrooms in the United States and Canada has encouraged teacher educators to propose methods to meaningfully raise awareness of cultural diversity, and connect that awareness to evolving understandings of pedagogy. Hollins (1996) also suggested that emerging teachers begin to examine themselves from a variety of different perspectives, one of which being their own cultural identity. Many of these suggestions gained favour with teacher educators and began to evolve into more specific methods of encouraging teachers to become more culturally competent by understanding their own worldviews, assumptions and biases (He &Cooper,

2009). More specifically, two examples of these methods include Schmidt's (2001) "ABCs of Cultural Understanding," and Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth and Crawford's (2005) use of ethnographic observations in teacher education programs.

The ABCs of Cultural Understanding, also known as the ABC model (Schmidt, 2001), is a pedagogical model for teacher education programs. In this approach, preservice teachers engage in activities designed to encourage thoughtful reflection on cross-cultural issues. For example, students engage in:

- autobiographical writing;
- biographical writing about a culturally different person;
- cross-cultural analyses of similarities and differences of individuals portrayed in these previous texts;
- cultural analysis of differences with attention to personal response; and
- communication of plans for literacy development for home/school connections (Schmidt, 2001).

This method encourages engagement in and reflection on one's own perceptions of culture, perceptions which may include biases and stereotypes. This method, however, appears to run the risk of contributing to a polarized or essentialized view of cultures, specifically because of its emphasis on contrastive analysis of cultural issues. Nonetheless, there is a small dialogic or relational component to this method which adds to its appeal as an authentic and constructivist approach to understanding cultural diversity. Its strength is most likely in its ability to encourage deep reflection on issues of culture and diversity. For this reason, activities outlined by Schmidt may be a starting point or preparatory step for students and teachers interested in more interactive activities inherent to CBL approaches.

Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth and Crawford (2005) cite a need for more cultural awareness and understanding among preservice teachers as a rationale for incorporating ethnographic observations into teacher education programs. The authors report on a study in which they taught preservice teachers methods of ethnographic observation and then had them observe community sites and reflect on their observations, as well as the ways in which their biases and assumptions affected these observations. The project appeared to assist preservice teachers in noticing how they observe and construct knowledge about culture. The strength of this method is perhaps its practice-focused approach, experientially incorporating methods of ethnographic research with a place-based pedagogy. The method, however, requires extensive scaffolding surrounding methods of ethnographic research, which in the study quoted was met with resistance from participants. Furthermore, despite its community site orientation, the approach omits a dialogical component, and I wonder what is lost by neglecting the role that dialogical interaction with community plays in shaping our knowledge and understandings.

Conclusion

Community-based learning has the potential to disrupt the traditional classroom model of teacher education programs, recasting the mould by moving students into relevant and meaningful environments. In doing so, preservice teachers are encouraged to engage in a situated form of critical consciousness (McGregor, Sanford, Clover & Krawetz, 2008). This critical consciousness is achieved through relational and dialogical interaction in communities that are relevant to the lives of students and that exist beyond traditional and limiting pedagogical environments like the classroom. Critical consciousness, developed through

community-based learning initiatives and critical reflection, is a potential means to challenge assumptions about ESL learners. As discussed in this chapter, these assumptions can be constructed through language, cultural comparisons, teacher education programs, and school-based policy and practice. Acknowledging these assumptions is only part of the process in working towards more empowering and relevant understandings of ESL learners. Teacher educators and preservice teachers must move beyond simply understanding that assumptions exist, and work toward challenging those assumptions by engaging in real and critical ways with the communities relevant to ESL learners, communities that lay beyond the confines of the university and public school classroom.

Assumptions about ESL learners, as well as the diverging demographics between students and teachers, are both important reasons to consider, or reconsider, how issues of diversity are treated in teacher education programs. How teacher educators address issues of diversity by designing and implementing pedagogical strategies that challenge assumptions will vary. Encouraging preservice teachers to observe deeply their understandings of culture through ethnographic observation and comparative analysis are two such strategies. Although these strategies motivate students to reflect deeply on their understanding of culture, neither method fuses a dialogical approach with community-based engagement. For this reason, teacher educators need to consider dynamic and creative approaches like community-based learning initiatives to raise a critical awareness. Furthermore, teacher educators need to design, implement, and discuss these initiatives and then recycle these findings into the discourse community. In doing so, they continue to encourage thoughtful and alternative approaches to preparing preservice teachers to teach all learners, especially the ones whose

strengths and resources may be more easily gleaned from understanding of, and interaction with, communities situated beyond the classroom.

Chapter 3: Overview of Methodology

This qualitative inquiry investigated the design and implementation of a collaborative, community-based pedagogy in order to challenge assumptions and understandings of preservice teachers about ESL learners. I have tried to establish in my literature review some of the ways in which ESL learners and ESL teaching have been influenced by social, linguistic and racial elements, both in teacher education and beyond. My rationale for investigating this pedagogy was therefore consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (2000) delineation of critical and constructivist paradigms, in which they describe ontological and epistemological assumptions around how knowledge is constructed socially, as well as influenced by factors such as politics, race, and ethnicity. Given this rationale, both the critical and constructivist paradigms were consistent with my worldview, as demonstrated by my intention to use and investigate CBL as a means to challenge understandings collaboratively. I therefore sought to use a methodology that was, as Lincoln and Guba suggest, dialogical and constructivist in nature. For these reasons, this study relies on methods of action research to investigate the experiences of all participants in engaging in this collaborative pedagogy. In this chapter, I explore action research and its relevance to my research questions. In doing so, I provide a rationale for why action research was a fit for carrying out my research design.

The Research Questions

This research is guided by the following four research questions:

- What does the process of designing and delivering a community-based teacher education course in ESL teaching methods look like?
- How do students, instructors, and community organizations experience participating in a community-based teacher education course?

- In what ways can a community-based learning experience potentially disrupt preservice teachers' assumptions of ESL learners and inform their emerging understandings of ESL pedagogy?

- How can the community participate as co-educators in teacher education programs?

Finding the project. Finding the methodology

I can't teach them this, can I? (Instructor, personal reflection, 2010)

EDCI 457, English as a Second Language (ESL), is an elective course for preservice elementary teachers in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. For the previous eight years the course had been taught in a classroom. It intended to cover a variety of issues related to teaching ESL in elementary schools including second language acquisition theory, curriculum adaptation, and acculturation. As a sessional instructor in the department, I taught this course for the first time in 2010. It was during this time that I began to critically examine my own pedagogy and to consider ways to improve how I taught the course, and how preservice teachers were engaging in the course. The desire to redesign the course began the process that would lead to this research project. I soon became interested not only in using community-based learning, but also in investigating on a formal level the effects of incorporating this pedagogy into the course.

When I taught the course for the first time in 2010, I had been feeling a certain sense of tension when reflecting on my classes. Twice a week my class and I came together with our readings, our reflective journals, and our epiphanies into the world of ESL. But I felt that somewhere outside the classroom walls there were places, people and stories that needed to be incorporated into my teaching, and into my students' understanding of ESL pedagogy.

Alone, I could not credibly relay these stories, especially when I heard myself making comments similar to this:

> You know, it's tough for these people [sip my coffee here]. They come to Canada looking for a better life and walk away from everything they've ever known only to not have their credentials acknowledged, not able to be dentists or teachers, and worse still, not to be able to communicate effectively with everyone from the guy at the corner store to the ESL specialist working with their children.

I started to recognize that the course was disconnected in a physical and dialogical way from any real ESL learners. My primary objective in teaching the course was to improve preservice teachers' understandings of ESL pedagogy. But I wondered how effectively I was doing this in a classroom void of interaction with actual ESL learners, their families, and the agents within the community who served them.

Discomforted, I began to think about how I could make these connections a stronger and more focused part of the course, and was therefore influenced to rethink my understanding of educational spaces. I realized the possible of having preservic teachers "out there," away from their comfy Americanos and text messages, and into the messier, real world beyond the ring road that encircled the campus. I wanted students "in" the community collaborating with and listening to other instructor-experts in order to give a more situated perspective on the lives of ESL students. Gradually this desire to move my students into new sites of learning evolved into incorporating an off-campus community-based project into the course. At this time, I was inspired by McGregor, Clover, Sanford and Krawetz's (2008) ideas on alternative practicums, and decided to experiment with a small, community-based project within my course.

Although I did not know it at the time, the project I was implementing would be the foundation on which I would continue to build this course, and ultimately research formally for my doctoral thesis. At the time I thought I was just trying to become a better instructor. I wanted to find an engaging and practical learning project that would heighten student awareness of a variety of issues, pedagogical and otherwise, and that would inform them in positive and effective ways as emerging teachers of ESL (and other) learners. What I would uncover, however, would end up challenging and transforming my own pedagogical ideas involving how communities and universities come together to share knowledge and resources.

After the course finished, I perceived that the community-based project had been well-received by both students and community members. I also experienced, "that worked!" feeling instructors sometimes experience after they reflect on their teaching experience. I decided I could continue to strengthen and improve the way I taught the course, making it even more effective the second time around. As a teacher I am always informally researching my methods—trying out new ideas and evaluating whether or not they work. I wanted to formalize this process by applying an action research strategy in order to research teaching from within, in collaboration with participants, to make connections between theory and practice, and to contribute to the area of higher education teaching and learning, particularly in regards to teacher education programs.

Beginning with a small-scale pilot project and working toward a more formal research project, I followed Lewin's cyclical conceptualizations of action research which involve working through stages such as reconnaissance, data collection, data analysis, and hypotheses that inform practice (Noffke & Somekh, 2011). The first time I taught the course (in 2010) was the

reconnaissance stage; I did not collect data on the project. Like many instructors, I was simply trying out a new strategy and feeling my way to effective teaching. My perceived effectiveness of how this pilot course went, along with student feedback, motivated me to formally investigate the process the next time I taught the course.

Epistemological assumptions: Linking pedagogy and methodology

Ultimately, I was wanting to investigate a pedagogy that would provide more relevant and meaningful opportunities for students to engage with people and environments connected to ESL learners, and in turn potentially encourage preservice teachers to critically analyze their own assumptions about ESL learners and ESL teaching. At the root of this study, therefore, was the idea that knowledge is constructed socially and experientially, both in the classroom and beyond. Social constructivism argues that learning is a product of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). When applied to teacher education, social constructivism argues that teachers develop through social exchanges and begin to make meaning by internalizing the knowledge that emerges from social exchanges (Richardson, 1997). Clearly, community-based projects that see preservice teachers interacting socially with ESL learners, their parents, and other community members illustrate a social constructivist approach to learning. My own pedagogical epistemology embraces this social constructivist approach; this is why community-based learning appealed to me and why I wanted to investigate it more deeply. And this is why I was seeking a methodology that would value collaborative, socially constructed methods of inquiry. I was logically drawn to action research.

Overview of action research

Despite an array of related terms including *action science*, *practitioner research*, and *cooperative inquiry*, action research is a general term used to describe a method of inquiry that is done by, or with, insiders of organizations or communities in order to address practical concerns relevant to those particular social groups or communities (Armstrong & Moore, 2004; Burns, 1999; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Small, 1995;). Specifically within education contexts, action research is often undertaken by instructors in order to understand or improve their teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kitchen & Stevens, 2008; McFarland & Stansell, 1993). However, the way in which action research is incorporated into educational studies varies markedly depending on the context, the participants, and the objectives of the study. For example, action research can be undertaken individually by the instructor or collaboratively with other instructors, students, or members of the community. The extent of this collaboration and the degree of control which participants have, as we will see, can also vary.

Furthermore, although action research is a methodology that seeks to improve practice, the extent to which that objective is driven by political, emancipatory, or social justice motivations will also vary. For all of these reasons, the term *action research* is often modified by researchers and authors by using various adjectives (e.g., *participatory action research, collaborative action research, community-based action research, etc.*) in order to denote more specifically the ways in which action research is applied to their processes of inquiry.

The history of action research

Historically, action research emerged as a methodology in the 1940s through the work of social scientist Kurt Lewin. Lewin is credited largely with legitimizing an approach to research that fused investigation with action (McFarland & Stansell, 1993). Although Lewin was interested in how collaborative decision making among insiders could affect economic productivity in post-war industrial contexts, his theory of action research penetrated a number of social science disciplines (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). One of these disciplines was education.

The receptivity of action research in the field of educational research, however, was probably influenced by the earlier work of educational theorist John Dewey. His philosophy on experiential education influenced his ideas on research. Dewy's ideas on experience in education connect neatly with the experiential, practice-driven approach of action research; both came together dynamically in the experiment known as the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago.

Dewey's laboratory school was based on the premise that ideas are incomplete and tentative until they are employed in action and are developed, corrected, and tested (Mayhew & Edwards, 2009, p.3). As early as 1903, John Dewey was establishing the need for inquiry into teaching by teacher-researchers, and creating communities of inquiry to explore his and others' theories related to education. In these beginnings, we see how Dewey joins teaching and research, and how experiential pedagogy and action-based methodology begin to overlap and influence one another. In much the same way, this dynamic yet messy intersection of

pedagogy and methodology emerged during an exploration of the methodological process of this research project, and I delve more deeply into this in the next chapter.

Principled methodological eclecticism

As worldviews, social concerns and research trends continue to shift and evolve, so do the methodologies that guide research processes. For this reason, emerging and nuanced action-oriented methodologies are continually being coined and utilized by action researchers. *Participatory action research, critical action research, emancipatory action research, community-based action research, classroom action research,* and *action science* are just a few of the second generation action research methodologies surfacing in social science research contexts. Clearly, action-oriented researchers are methodologically eclectic (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Small, 1995), creating new and dynamic approaches to research that suitably convey the underlying epistemologies that drive their research forward. By exploring action-oriented research and making connections between action research methodologies and my own research goals, I saw the value in incorporating an eclectic approach to my own research processes. In particular, I was drawn to consider elements of participatory (action) research, and community-based research.

Participatory action research (PAR)

Participatory action research (PAR) is an action-oriented methodology that fuses collaboration, social justice, emancipation, action and research into one dynamic approach to inquiry. What sets PAR apart from other action-oriented methodologies is the overt attention it pays to the issue of empowerment. PAR's connection to empowerment is influenced by critical theory and assumes that research participants can shape their social environments,

empower themselves, and affect change through the processes of collective knowledge production and action (Balcazar, Taylor, Kielhofner, Tamley, Benziger, Carlin & Johnson, 2002; Fahmi, 2004; Fals-Borda 2006). Participatory action research appealed to me for a number of reasons.

Specifically, Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) articulate seven key features of PAR; all but one of those features are consistent with both my pedagogical intentions and my research objectives. According to Kemmis and McTaggart, PAR is a social process, is participatory, practical and collaborative, is critical and reflexive, and aims to transform both theory and practice. This study is inextricably linked to a pedagogical ideology that teaching and learning is a social process involving a participatory, practical, collaborative, and critical reflection between theory and practice. Therefore, applying PAR appeared to be an excellent fit for a study exploring this pedagogical approach, and in which the methodology and pedagogy are so entwined. There was, however, one concern.

One of Kemmis and McTaggart's seven features of PAR is that it is emancipatory. Central to participatory action research is its concern with creating a more just society through the empowerment of its participants, many of whom are from oppressed, exploited and disenfranchised groups (Fals-Borda, 2006; Gaventa, 1988; Small, 1995; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hal & Jackson, 1993). Indeed, this study was concerned with young ESL learners, their communities, and the organizations that serve them. Yet, the ESL learner was not a participant in this study. Instead, university preservice teachers, community members and their instructor were. I cannot argue reasonably that preservice teachers and the instructor were, as Kemmis

and McTaggart argue, as constrained by social, political or economic structures, at least not in the same way that ESL learners or their families are. I felt tension and inconsistency in labeling this process emancipatory for all of my participants. Because six out of seven of Kemmis and McTaggart's principles of PAR relate to my study, I take them, leaving the seventh emancipatory one on the margins, hoping that ultimately this research aids ESL learners. For this reason my methodology was informed by the aforementioned six principles, although is not purely PAR.

Community-based research

This research project aspired to create partnerships in learning between the university and the community, or more specifically, a number of partnerships between groups of students and various members of the community situated in environments relevant to the content of our course. It was a holistic inquiry into that process of partnership-making, and a research project connected directly with the community. But was this community connection enough to call the methodology community-based research? Community-based research (CBR) is a partnership of students, faculty and community-based members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donohue, 2003, p.3). According to this definition, CBR appeared to be an excellent fit for my study. Furthermore, Israel, et al. (2003) outline nine key principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), all of which seem relevant to the objectives of this study. To summarize Israel et al.'s nine principles, CBPR is presented as a cooperative, participatory process in which community members and researchers engage

equally in a co-learning, capacity-building, empowering process that balances research and action. This definition summarizes nicely what I hoped to create in this process of inquiry.

There are many useful elements of this approach that I could apply to the methodological framework that guided this study. In particular, Israel et al. (2003) identify that CBPR provides an alternative approach to traditional research that has often systematically excluded participants from having power and influence over the research process (p.53). Israel et al. draw attention to participatory and democratic aspects of CBR, aspects that I wished to highlight in my own research project by working in a collaborative way with research participants and by reconceptualising the role of knowledge, expert and place in education. It was for all of these reasons that I incorporated principles of CBR into the methodological design of this study. Unfortunately, a closer reading into the essence of CBR encouraged me to think twice about embracing CBR completely in this project.

As mentioned earlier, Strand et al. offer a tidy definition of CBR that would fit nicely with my research objectives. A problem, arises, however when they broaden their definition and articulate that the community involved in CBR consists of people that are oppressed, powerless, economically deprived, or who are in some way disadvantaged by existing social, political or economic constraints (p.4). Similarly, Marullo et al. (2003) promote the connection between CBR and marginalized communities when they argue that CBR is used as a vehicle to empower disadvantaged communities or groups. This concern with disenfranchised populations creates similar tensions to the ones I experienced related to calling this methodology PAR, as not all of my research participants fall neatly into a disenfranchised group. Furthermore, inherent to

both PAR and CBR is the assumption that the design and implementation of the research process is collaborative. In this study, all participants worked on pedagogical design of the project, but the research was driven by the instructor. It is this discrepancy in collaboration that I discuss below.

The participatory and collaborative nature of action research

Action research was a relevant methodological fit for this study because of its emphasis on participatory and democratic processes in research (Armstrong & Moore, 2004; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason, 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2006), that were mirrored in my own approach to teaching the course. Furthermore, collaboration and participation are inherent principles of community-based learning (Israel, Eng, Schulz & Parker, 2005; Puma, Bennet, Cutforth, Tombari & Stein, 2009; Stoecker, 2003). Because this research project explored community-based learning and my own pedagogy, its methodology needed to reflect the participatory and collaborative qualities inherent in both. Action research reflects these principles. According to Reason (2006), action research builds democratic, participative, pluralistic communities of inquiry and is only possible with, for, and by persons and communities (p.193). Similarly, Armstrong and Moore (2004) argue that action research involves an exploration of practices and perspectives in which the participants are the main agents for changing the environment in which they are situated, and collaboration is a key element in the research design process. Action research provided this research project with a collaborative and participatory-minded methodology that was consistent with my pedagogical worldview as well as with community-based learning, the method of teaching I was interested

in exploring in this project. However, the degree to which the participants engaged in the design and analysis of the research process was quite low.

Who was in control?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, pedagogy and methodology overlapped in the orientation of this research project, and at times they overlapped in inconvenient and challenging ways. Although I knew that I wanted the participants of this project to participate, collaborate, reflect, and discuss course content and issues, I experienced difficulty in making the design of this research project collaborative. This is where teasing apart pedagogy and methodology became challenging in a project immersed in the research of teaching. For example, my research participants were very much involved in the design of the course. As I discuss in the next chapter, both preservice teachers and community members shaped the design of the community-based projects, and contributed in a variety of ways to the data used in this study. However, the research questions, the methods I used to carry out the research, and the analysis was driven by me. It was impossible to collaborate on the design of the research questions with preservice teachers because of the issue of power-over; I did not know who was participating in my research project until the course was completed and my final grades submitted. Furthermore, given that I would have 13 community-based partners and 31 students participating, collaborating on the data analysis would have been extremely difficult.

Participation in action research processes will vary according to the research context, and in particular to the varying degrees of control that researchers and participants hold (Balcazar et al., 2002; Israel et al., 2003). Balcazar et al. (2002) discuss a continuum of participant involvement in the implementation of CBPR. It is a useful tool in conceptualizing the

role that participants and researcher play, and in my project it provided me with relief from the tension I experienced in calling my methodology collaborative and participatory when the degree to which my participants actually designed the beginning stages of the research project was low. Balcazer et al. describe a continuum of participant control moving from zero to high. Where did my research fit on this continuum? Originally, I conceived of all participants collaborating on the design and implementation of the research project and perhaps would have initially answered the above question with a value of 8 or 9. Despite my efforts, however, community participants often deferred to me for guidance about how the community-based project would be designed and carried out. Furthermore, in the data analysis and synthesis stage, it was challenging to reconnect with student participants and community participants. Many students left the city after the term was completed to return to hometowns or work. Furthermore, the analysis completed in this study took place a number of months after the data were collected. For all of these reasons, I would place participants at a 4-5 on Balcazar's continuum.

Because this study investigated collaborative, community-based learning, and the knowledge constructed from this style of teaching, the methodology employed in this research project needed to reflect the principles of collaborative, socially constructed knowledge inherent to the pedagogical and research-oriented objectives of this project. The epistemological assumptions of action-oriented research addressed these issues and were therefore considered an effective fit for this study. Below I discuss some of the action-oriented methodologies that influenced the methodological framework for this study.

Conclusion

Research into one's teaching practice is, from a traditional perspective, a messy affair. Exploring teaching from a research perspective creates a subjective process of inquiry in which the lines between teaching and research are blurred. Despite how tangled pedagogy and methodology become, I believe that research into teaching practices from any perspective, but especially from the perspective of those passionate enough to immerse themselves in the process, is necessary. It is necessary in order to continue to develop best practice approaches, especially when those best practices aim at informing the teachers who will teach, and hopefully empower our ESL learners. Despite acknowledging the challenges of researching my own teaching, ethical and otherwise, I nonetheless invited the overlap between pedagogy and methodology in this study. As a teacher and a graduate student, pedagogy and methodology were inextricably linked in my life and in this project; teasing them apart was unnecessary and almost useless. Indeed, I feel that pedagogy and methodology came together in this research project in a commonsensical union, and I enjoyed occupying and making sense of the messy, in-between spaces that were inevitably opened up in this project.

Finally, this research project made use of an eclectic approach, borrowing relevant elements from a number of methodologies. According to Hall (1992),

> …for participatory research there is no methodological orthodoxies, no cookbook approaches to follow. The principle is that both issues and ways of working should flow from those involved in the context. In practice a creative and very wide variety of approaches have been used. All approaches have been selected because of their potential for drawing out knowledge and analysis in a social or collective way (p.20).

This project used action research informed by participatory and community-based paradigms. It employed a participatory and collaborative approach by incorporating the voices of students, community members, and instructor in both the design of the course, and in effect, the design of the research project. However, the degree to which all participants contributed was not entirely equal, as the participant-researcher (I) created and facilitated both the course and the research project and had more control over its design and implementation. Nonetheless, I sought the collaboration of the participants in aspects of the design of the course, in their ideas on data collection, and on their responses to my interpretation and representation of our findings. Together, I hoped that as participants we collectively embraced pedagogy and methodology in much the same way that pedagogy and methodology embraced one another in this inquiry into community-based teaching and learning.

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter describes the methods I used to carry out this research project. I begin by describing the ESL course that was part of the teacher education program in which I was a sessional instructor. This course, and my approach to teaching it, was the inspiration and basis of the study. In describing the course, I also discuss the student participants and describe how I elicited their participation in the project. Next, I outline how I identified potential community partners, and how I elicited their participation. I touch briefly on my own role as a participant-researcher and how I collected data from my own observations of how the project unfolded. I then describe my data sources and the methods I used to analyze that data. I also discuss what I call the messy intersections between research and teaching, in which I describe and reflect briefly on the 'methods' I used to structure the course. This discussion is consistent with my goal of describing the process of designing and implementing a community-based course. I believe that a discussion of these methods was best included alongside a discussion of the research methods, as teaching and research are so entwined in this study.

The Course and the Students

As discussed in earlier chapters, the inspiration for this research project was an ESL methods course offered to preservice teachers enrolled in the bachelor's of education degree program or the post degree program (PDP) at the University of Victoria. I was the instructor of this course during the winter term of the 2011-2012 university year. It was during this time that I conducted research on incorporating a community-based teaching and learning project into the course. The calendar description of this course is as follows:

> A survey of curriculum and instruction designed to develop beginning competence for teaching English as a second language. There are three main themes: language instruction techniques, evaluation of the language and educational needs of ESL students, and developing sensitivity for the prior educational and cultural experiences of ESL students.

Like many courses in many departments, this description is a vague outline and the actual course can vary considerably depending on the instructors, their methods, and their ideology. This ESL course is an 'elective'; however, students must take either it or French as a Second Language (FSL) in order to graduate. The course was offered in the winter term (January-April), 2012 and enrolled 32 students. Of these students, 17 were in their third year, 14 were in their fourth year, and one was in their fifth year. All students had completed one three-week practicum. The class met twice weekly for one and one-half hour for a total of 13 weeks, or 26 classes.

Planning the course

When designing this course and setting the syllabus, I began by outlining the concepts I wanted to include in the course. These concepts are categorized in Table 1.

Table 1

Language, Teaching and Cultural Concepts from the Course

Language Concepts	Teaching Concepts	Community and Culture Concepts
• Second language acquisition theory • Stages of language proficiency • Communicative competence • BICS-CALP Framework (Cummins)	• Sheltering the Text • Adapting Lesson Plans • Designing Theme-based units • Error Correction • Methods of instruction • Assessment and Evaluation	• Cross-cultural understanding • Identifying assumptions about ESL learners • Challenging damaging assumptions • Learners as a resource • Community resources

From these concepts, I drafted objectives or outcomes of the course. Some of these included:

- Students will be introduced to the BICS-CALP Framework and will be asked to reflect and apply it in reflective assignments and lesson plan assignments.
- Students will use the Stages of Language Proficiency Chart when explaining choices they make in lesson planning and adaptation assignments.
- Students will be required to create professionally-styled documents using Microsoft Publisher, and apply visual and graphic organizers and prompts that support ESL learners' understanding of existing material.
- Students will be able to shelter or adapt an existing lesson plan.
- Students will be able to articulate why they made certain adaptations of materials and lesson plans, citing the literature.
- Students will reflect on weekly readings, in weekly reflective journals, and in weekly discussion exercises.
- Students will have an opportunity to engage in a community-based experience and will be invited to reflect and present on their experiences and how those experiences connect both to course material and to their emerging understandings of ESL pedagogy.

Although all three main areas—language, teaching and community and culture—were addressed through classroom-based activities, I envisioned that the community-based project would play a large role in meeting objectives under the community and culture area.

Introducing the research project to student participants

Prior to starting the course in the fall of 2011, I obtained approval from my university's Human Ethics Review Board to collect data from the students enrolled in the course. In order to collect data—student artifacts, reflective journals, course-based assignments, and responses to a post-course questionnaire—I needed to inform students that I was both instructing the course, as well as conducting research on the course. For this purpose I used a third party colleague to assist in describing the project and collecting consent. A third party was necessary in this case to mitigate a potential power-over conflict of interest that could occur if I, as the instructor, had knowledge of who was or was not participating in the research project. For this

reason, I did not know who was participating in the research part of the course until the course finished and I had submitted final grades (April, 2012).

The third party departmental colleague came to the class during the third week. During the first two weeks of the course, I did not mention the study to the students; I only described the course, including its objectives, its community-based focus, and its expectations regarding the community-based project. I wanted to create a sense of community in the class without complicating the first days with the description of the research project. The third party thoroughly explained the study including the risks and benefits to participating in the study, the expectations of participation, and issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and freedom to withdraw. This colleague distributed and collected informed consent forms and acted as a contact for the duration of the study for any concerns the students had regarding the study. During this recruitment phase, students were also informed about the dual role of the instructor-researcher and the potential power-over relationship that this dual role presented in this study. Furthermore, students were cautioned against discussing the *study* at all with the instructor, although they were encouraged to discuss anything else related to the *course* with the instructor. They were given the third party's contact information for any questions or concerns regarding the study, or their participation in it.

All 32 students enrolled in the course agreed to participate in the community-based project, but only 31 of them completed consent forms agreeing to participate in the research project. As part of the course, participating in this community-based assignment was not mandatory. Students were able to choose between completing the community-based project and a research paper. Of the 32 students who participated in the community-based project,

one student ultimately had to pull out because of scheduling conflicts. This student instead completed the alternative essay assignment. Therefore, 30 out of 32 students, or 93% of the students enrolled in the course, participated in the community-based assignment *and* consented to participating in the research and data collection aspect of the project. From this pool of students, data was collected from in-course assignments and post-course questionnaires. All 30 students completed the requisite course assignments which would be later collected as data, and a total of 15 students, or 50%, completed post-course questionnaires which were also included in the data analysis.

Dual role and power-over

During this course-based action research study, I held the dual role of both researcher and instructor. The student participants in the study were students in this course, resulting in a potential power-over relationship between student participants and the instructor-researcher. I believed, however, that it was necessary to conduct research with these participants because I was interested in investigating the effects of a community-based course on the understandings of preservice teachers towards ESL learners and ESL pedagogy. There was no other instructor available to teach the course that was as invested in or as knowledgeable about both ESL pedagogy and community-based learning.

Furthermore, I believed that teachers and teacher educators are always studying their pedagogies; they try out new ideas and reflect on what is effective and what is not. Usually this process is informal. In this case, I believed it was extremely important to be able to formalize the process in order to disseminate the findings—the experiences and perspectives of the students, community-based groups, and the instructor in regards to engaging in community-

based learning. In order to understand whether or not a pedagogy such as community-based learning is an effective method to raise awareness of minority-language learners and shape preservice teachers' understandings of how to teach a growing number of ESL students, instructors like me, invested in these pedagogies, need to study them from the inside and share those results with the discourse community. For this reason, I believed that the dual role of instructor-researcher was necessary in this case.

Introducing the project to community-based participants

From developing the pilot course, I had maintained partnerships with a number of relevant and local community groups that were connected to ESL communities, issues, and policy. These groups included two non-profit organizations, two immigrant youth groups, an immigrant women's support group, settlement workers from the local school district, ESL specialists, and the parents of ESL students. I recruited community-based participants via email or telephone, or in person. I first contacted community-based participants to describe the course and its foundations in community-based learning. I met with potential partners and explained the study and its connection to the course. I also explained the risks and benefits of participating in the study, the expectations of participation, and the issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and freedom to withdraw (see Appendix A). Community-based participants were provided with a consent form, and when applicable so were their organizations. For example, I invited a youth coordinator from a local non-profit organization to participate in the course. When she agreed, I invited her to participate in the study and I informed her that she would also need to obtain approval from the organization. I spoke with administrators from that organization and sought their approval by explaining the study as I explained it to the youth

coordinator, and providing a consent form to be signed by a representative from the organization.

Ultimately, a total of 13 community-based cites were used in the community-based project (see Table 2).

Table 2

Community-based sites, description of placement, and participant names

Community-based Participants	Description of Placements	Community Participants	Student Participants
Cultural Access Centre (CAC) The Cultural Access Centre (CAC) is a local non-profit organization that runs a variety of programs offering support to immigrants and refugees in the community. A total of 7 students worked with CAC in four of their programs.	Homework Club for Immigrant Youth	Margaret	Lucy
	Youth Leadership Group	Margaret	Shauna; Nora
	Daycare for children of parents enrolled in language courses	Freda	Sylvia; Carly
	Adult ESL Instructor	Markus	Kate; Rachel
Community Immigrant Support Centre (CISC) The Community Immigrant Support Centre (CISC) is similar to CAC in that it is a local non-profit organization that serves the needs of immigrants and refugees through a variety of programming. A total of 3 students worked with two of their programs.	Homework Club for Immigrant Youth	Kurt	Emma
	Immigrant Youth Group (Journalism-focused)	Emily	Jaime; Donnie
School-based Placements ESL specialists in public elementary and middle schools work with small groups of ESL students pulled out of the classroom for a few hours each week. A total of 8	Elementary ESL Specialist	Eileen	Rhonda; Erik; Denise
	Middle School ESL Specialist	Eileen	Janet; Sally
	Elementary ESL	Linda	Pam; Erin; Taylor

students worked with two public ESL specialists. High school teachers working in an international program at a private high school teach core subjects such as Social Studies and English to classes that are entirely comprised of international students. These teachers also teach adjunct support English classes as well as classes like Canadian Culture. Two students worked at this school.	Specialist High School ESL Specialists		Paige; Louise
School-based settlement workers The local school district employs two SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools) workers. Settlement workers work with families of children who are transitioning into the school and the community. A total of four students worked with two settlement workers.	SWIS Worker SWIS Worker	Mona Issa	Kelly; Beatrice; Martha
Parents of young ESL learners Three parents of school-aged ESL learners participated in this project in order to discuss their experiences adapting to the cultural and linguistic differences of a new school system. Three students worked with parents of ESL learners.	Parents of ESL learners	Grace Sumara Sophia	Kim; Blair; Agnes
Immigrant Women's Support Group This group was an emerging	Connie		Faith; Lindsay; Autumn

support group for immigrant women who had been identified as "isolated" in the community. The group met weekly at a local neighbourhood house and engaged in variety of activities, all aimed to help support immigrant women to make connections and transitions in the community. Three students worked with this group.			

All of the above community-based participants agreed to participate in the research project, but data was collected in a sampling way from seven representative participating members. Data was collected in the form of post-course interviews that were recorded and later transcribed.

Introducing a third perspective: The instructor-researcher

I was the third participant in this study. As both the instructor of the course and the primary researcher, I was situated deeply in this project. I was interested in investigating my community-based approach to teaching an ESL class from three perspectives—the student perspective, the community perspective, and my own perspective. Obviously, I wanted to elicit how community-based learning affected students and the community. But I also valued my own voice as an instructor engaging with the pedagogy. One of the objectives of the research was to inform other instructors and educators interested in structuring courses with a community-engaged focus and for this reason my own perspective would enrich the discussion.

However, I did experience tension in balancing these three perspectives. Specifically, I wanted to guard against privileging my own voice over that of the community. Much of the literature emerging recently out of the field of community-service learning cautions educators and researchers in privileging themselves and their work over the voice and needs of community partners (Bortolin, 2011; Giles &Cruz, 2000; Howard, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Ward, 1999). Ultimately, however, my voice was necessary. I was an integral part of the design and implementation of the course and the study. I believed my perspective and my observations would inform other instructors who ultimately will or will not take up this pedagogy.

To document my role and my perspective, I kept a research journal throughout the duration of this project, from October, 2011-June, 2012, in which I reflected and made observations, as well as kept notes on the process and questions that arose along the way. The observations, questions, and notes contained in this journal became data, and were coded during the analysis stage.

The Messy Intersections between Teaching and Research

Here is where my chapter on "methods" gets a bit messy, and where the lines between teaching and research become blurred for both the reader and the writer. It is difficult for me to write a methods chapter, outlining the steps I took to carry out this research, and not touch upon the steps I took in structuring and implementing the course for which the entire project was structured. For me, these methods are an integral part of the research process since I am researching my own teaching. Furthermore, I believe the steps I took in structuring and

teaching the course inform both the research methods and the objectives of the study. A prominent objective, as illustrated by my research questions, is to inform other instructors interested in taking up community-based pedagogy how to potentially structure a community-based course. In writing this chapter I found the intersections between teaching and research sticky, yet I attempted to embrace this stickiness by including in my methods chapter an outline and reflection of the 'methods' used in teaching the course.

Teaching 'methods'

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I opted not to tell the students on the first day that this course was doubling as a research project. I did not want to overwhelm or confuse students during the first few classes, and wanted instead to build community within the class, as I would with any class. For this reason, during the first four classes I proceeded as I would have had this course not been tied to a research project.

To begin, I introduced the course syllabus, outlining briefly the optional community-based assignment, highlighting that it would be a major component of the course. I used some awareness-raising activities that aimed at encouraging students to reflect critically on their own assumptions toward minority learners. I introduced community-based learning in higher education through classroom discussion and by using an article that discussed community-based projects at the University of British Columbia. I facilitated a small group discussion on community-based learning in teacher education programs, as well as in other educational settings. Establishing a sense of community, as well as an understanding in community-based learning, was key during the first two weeks.

During the fifth class, my third party assistant came to the class; I disappeared, and she explained the project and the consent forms. She then distributed the consent forms, and availed herself to the students if they were to have further questions. She collected signed consent forms then, and returned one week later to collect the rest. She kept the consent forms for the duration of the term, and revealed them to me only once final grades were submitted.

For the next two weeks, or for four classes, we turned to more theoretical understandings of second language acquisition, including readings and discussions about language learning, error correction, and methods of language teaching. As a class we also started to examine modified lessons for ESL learners, and ideas surrounding how and why teachers can shelter a text and a lesson. Sheltering a lesson is when teachers build in adjunct support materials and resources to help students negotiate meaning. Sheltering material involves analyzing an existing lesson plan or activity and breaking it down into smaller pieces, looking at ways that material can be made more accessible for certain learners. In this case, we were looking at ways to make material that is culturally and linguistically challenging more accessible for ESL learners. There are a variety of ways to increase accessibility in this way, including accessing background knowledge, using more visuals, providing increased comprehension checks, providing vocabulary or theme-specific worksheets, providing more group work activities, and even re-writing a text.

Choosing community-based experiences

At the end of the fourth week of classes, after having built a solid base and delving into some more theoretical issues, I had students pick their community-based placements. Each

student was given a list of participating placements, a description of the placement and contact information for the placement. I put each placement site on the board, and through an admittedly disorganized, loud and confusing method, students grouped themselves according to their interests, and perhaps according to where their friends were going.

There was an overwhelming interest in working with the two ESL specialists, an enthusiasm that I also noted in the pilot course, as well as in subsequent sections of the course I have since taught. Interestingly, I struggled much with whether or not I should even include ESL specialists as part of this project, and this resistance was recorded over and over again in the pages of my research journal:

> ESL specialists? Are they "community" enough? Want to get students out of the classroom, out of the school. But…ESL specialists are still part of the "community," and they want to participate. Easy placements. And students want to work with them. Does this matter? Maybe include them but not collect data on them? (Instructor, Personal Research Journal, 2011).

So why did I end up using ESL specialists? To begin with, I had to match 32 students with community partners without being too demanding on any one organization or participating community member. The reality was that in Victoria, organizations and associations that serve the needs of Canadian newcomers are scarce. Victoria is not Vancouver or Calgary. I decided I would not let the scarcity of neatly packaged non-profits deter me from finding relevant places for preservice teachers to visit. And this scarcity encouraged me to broaden my definition of what a "relevant community-based site of learning" would include. Ideally, I would have preferred to have all of my students working in youth groups, homework clubs, and at non-profit organizations that serve immigrants and refugees, but after contacting

everyone I could think of in Victoria that represented a relevant community-based placement, I realized I would have to open my mind to including ESL specialists as community sites.

The course unfolds

Once the students were organized into their placements, they were responsible for connecting with the contact listed for their placement, and arranging to meet and discuss their placement. The students would have the next eight weeks to organize and complete their community-based placement, outside of regular class time. During these eight weeks, the class continued to come together and carry on with the course material. We also took time to debrief about community placements. We did not, however, replace on-campus meetings with community time. I was nervous about doing this as the chair of my department had informed me that students were obligated to be in class for a certain number of hours per term. I lessened other course-based assignments in order to "replace" some of the content with a focus on community-based work. I will discuss these issues of flexibility in scheduling and timetabling in chapter 6. In checking in with students during class time, I was hoping to ensure students were on track and not having difficulties connecting with their community partners. In this regard, most students planned accordingly and did not have issues in meeting with their partners and completing their projects.

During the final 4 classes, students presented for the class on their community-based experiences, providing a summary overview of where they went and what they did. They also had to include in their presentation aspects of their reflection and relevant information for other students. The objective of the presentation was to provide all students with exposure to the experiences of all the students in the class. In this way, students shared their experiences,

their reflections, and their insights into how their approach to ESL teaching and learning was being shaped by these projects. These presentations also built community within our class and resulted in all students learning not only about relevant community-based experiences, but about how their peers were being affected by these experiences. The effects of this collective learning were demonstrated by the many students who included entire journal entries that were based on their reflection of their peers' experiences in the community. Students also submitted a 5-7 page written account of their community-based experiences, including a brief summary and a longer reflection of the experience.

Data Sources and Data Collection

I collected data from participating students through a variety of course-based assignments as well as a post-course survey. A number of course-based assignments were used that involved the dual purpose of meeting course-based objectives and providing data for this study. For this reason, copies of all assignments submitted were made, either by photocopying assignments or making electronic copies. When necessary, these assignments were evaluated and returned to the students, but the copies were kept until the course was completed and grades submitted. Not until this time did I have access to the consent forms and know who had agreed to participate in the study. At this point, assignments of students who did not agree to participate in the study were destroyed. Those assignments of students who did agree to participate were used as data and analyzed.

I collected data from community-based participants using semi-structured interviews during our initial pre-course meetings (Fall, 2011). During these meetings, I elicited from them

how they envisioned a partnership between themselves and the students participating in the project, encouraging them to shape the project based on their own expertise and interests (Puma, Bennet, Cutforth, Tombari & Stein, 2009; Stoecker, 2003). I used this data to structure the course-based projects, but also to analyze how community-based participants entered into community-based learning partnerships, and what their objectives and concerns were prior to engagement. By collecting data through semi-structured interviews both before and after the community-based projects, I intended to collect data that, once analyzed, could provide insight into the community perspective at the various stages of engagement in community-based learning.

When the course and all of the community-based experiences were completed, I chose a sampling of seven of the community-based participants and interviewed each of them again about their experiences. These semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. These transcriptions, along with the data from the pre-project interviews, comprised the data collected and analyzed from the community-based participants.

Coding the Data

I reviewed the data, analyzing interview transcripts, course assignments, post-course questionnaires, and my own research journal's notes and observations through an open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process resulted in the emergence of core categories and concepts. I then organized these 'noticings' into subcategories, and continued to review the data. Consistently reviewing the data, and using a constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2005; Morgan, 1993) I began to notice themes emerging. I continued to read and reread the

excerpts, looking for similarities among excerpts, and ultimately grouping similar concepts together. An example of the process of coding is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Example coding technique

Text	**Initial Codes**	**Eventual Categories**
Excerpt 1 The challenges that these immigrant youth brought up are important to recognise as a teacher. I know that racism is a problem, but for some reason I thought that it was becoming less of an issue. I was disappointed to hear that immigrant youth still feel that they are singled out because of what they look like, how they speak, or where they are from. This made me realize the importance of education. The reason that most racism happens is that people do not understand other cultures or do not understand that their jokes are hurting someone. In order to make immigrant youth feel safe and welcome, it is essential that the class learns more about the histories of their classmates.	connecting youth perspective/experience to teaching racism previous assumption assumption challenged racism linking experience to teaching; future teaching	Linking community-based experiences to teaching Challenging Previous Assumptions Challenging Previous Assumptions Linking Community-based Experiences to teaching
Excerpt 2 What was important for us I think was to know that...the university community was interested in what we were doing and wanted to learn more…I explained to the youth these are going to be your teachers one day…or going to be your peers' teachers so they've come to ... gain some perspective about what it's like to be you and what your needs are...And I think that was really	university interested in us/validation gaining perspective sharing/youth as co-	Benefits to Community Community as Co-Educators

enlightening for many of them because they were like 'that's really cool because our needs are being taken into consideration.' Because a lot of the times I do get some complaints from youth about teachers, and I sympathize with teachers because I know how under-resourced they are in school and I know the ESL programs have often been cut […]And so it's a really interesting dynamic...from the youth's perspective to see university students come in; they're like, 'oh we don't know university students'...This is really cool that they're coming in to train and this is part of their training. So for that I think it was really beneficial for us (Margaret, personal communication, April 19, 2012).	educators their needs/reciprocity issues between youth and teachers sharing/youth as co-educators benefit to community	Community as Co-Educators Reciprocity Community as Co-Educators

As I reviewed the data and "noticed" ideas emerging, I applied codes to text. In the above example, these codes included community as co-educators, linking community-based experiences to teaching, and challenging assumptions. Continuing to review the data, I began to notice certain 'noticings' or codes re-emerging across the data, or codes that could be linked together under more general codes. These codes became the categories I began to focus on. I continued to review the data looking for such categories, relabeling or fleshing out some of my initial codes. For example, "racism" was only coded twice throughout my initial data analysis. As I poured over the data, however, I saw that the context in which racism was being used was consistent with another emerging category, that I labelled "challenging assumptions." When no new categories were emerging for me, I perceived that a saturation point had been reached. Coded data that did not fit a category, or in other words, were not recycled substantially

throughout the data, were not used in the representation of the findings. The prominent categories that emerged from this analysis included: amount of participation in the community-based project; damaging assumptions or generalizations; disrupting or challenging existing assumptions; the issue of racism; the importance of communication in community-based teaching and learning; expressions of empathy; and discussion of professional directions. The following chapter delves deeper into these categories, outlining each of them more specifically and providing examples to illustrate each category. In Chapter 6 I then reflect on the implications of these categories.

Chapter 5: Findings

The following chapter presents and discusses categories that have emerged from analyzing data from student course work and reflections, student questionnaires, community interviews, and my own teaching and research journals. In reporting the following findings, I attempt to balance my perspective with those of community-based participants and student participants in order to construct a holistic picture of how the project was designed, delivered, and received. Furthermore, I have chosen to represent the most prominent categories that emerged consistently throughout the coding process, and that I believe provide most relevant insight into my initial research questions. These categories are:

- Perceived benefits of participating in the project for community-based participants
- Perceived benefits of participating in the project for student participants
- Perceived benefits of participating in the project for the instructor
- How the project challenged or created assumptions for student participants
- Perceptions on the role participation played in the success of the project
- Perceptions of how issues of language teaching and language learning were affected by the community-based projects.

I would like to note that in presenting these categories I have chosen to weave in personal reflection, interpretation and discussion. Although I delve more deeply into the implications of these findings in Chapter 6, there are places within this chapter where I include reflection in order to contextualize and delineate these findings more clearly. Although somewhat unconventional, I believe these reflective interpretations add to the richness of the findings and the readability of the chapter by situating the data more immediately in an interpretive, qualitative and critical style.

Benefits to the Community

Aware of the criticism around the potential inequality that community-based learning can create by privileging the university over the community (Bortolin, 2011; Giles & Cruz, 2000; Howard, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000), I was keen to elicit and represent the community voice in this project. I collected data from interviews during my initial meetings with community partners as well as during post-project interviews. From these interviews emerged community members' perceived benefits of participating in the project. These benefits are discussed below by outlining data collected from community-based participants and include: feeling validated by the university; connecting teachers with newcomer youth; sharing perspectives through dialogue; and encouraging more cross-cultural awareness among preservice teachers.

Mona[1]

Mona was a settlement worker with a local school district, working as part of the province-wide SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools) program. She and other settlement workers work with new Canadian families as they enter and transition into public schools. SWIS workers act as liaisons between schools and new families, providing resources, counselling services, and relevant information to assist in the transition process.

I met with Mona at her office before the course started to ask if she would like to participate in the program. I explained the course, who my students were, my idea of how the community-based project would be organized, and why I hoped she would participate as a potential community-based partner. Throughout the meeting, Mona discussed her role as a

[1] All names of community participants, student participants and organizations have been changed.

SWIS worker, as well as her enthusiasm for participating in the project. She described her observations that many of the teachers she had worked with lacked cross-cultural understanding and effective communication skills. Mona admitted that she thought that teachers, both preservice and continuing, could benefit greatly by connecting with the local immigrant and refugee community. For this reason, Mona expressed interest in the project; she had witnessed many students and their families struggle in schools and with teachers for reasons related to language and culture, and it was obvious that she wanted to continue to help ESL learners in any way possible.

Keen to ensure a sense of reciprocity between community partners and myself, I encouraged Mona to contribute her ideas to the project, and asked her to suggest how *she* would like the project to unfold or what she would like the students in the course to do with her and/or for her. To this she responded, "Oh…you are the expert. You are the university. What do you think? Whatever you think is fine with me" (Mona, personal communication, Dec.6, 2011). Despite my efforts to encourage Mona to design her placement, it was clear that she wanted direction from me. Admittedly, this made me uncomfortable. Given the theory I had read and been influenced by, I was sensitive to my position and was trying not to control the project based on my needs or the needs of my students. Instead, I wanted to encourage the needs and interests of the community to shape the project. Despite my efforts to do so, Mona, along with other community members, consistently deferred to me for guidance. In many cases, this experience was the first time that any of them had been sought out by a university and asked to partner in a course-based learning initiative. Similarly, none of the community-based participants in this study had ever solicited the partnership of the university

in any other projects. When asked why they had not, most community-based participants admitted that they had never thought of it, or that they were not sure who they would connect with or how partnerships were arranged.

During that first meeting with Mona, I noted that she was moved by my initiation. Clearly, my teaching objectives and her professional passion were closely linked. At one point during our initial meeting, Mona started to cry. She explained that she was touched that the university was taking an interest in immigrants and refugees, and that a researcher was interested in helping newcomers and their families. Although Mona was not able to articulate a partnership strategy, I nonetheless felt because of this reaction and because of her explanation of it, that a type of reciprocity was being achieved. Later in the post-course interview, Mona would state:

> When I heard that you want to do something like that, I appreciate it. I wanted to meet, I wanted to help and I did…You did, you did, in so many ways, I noticed that you connected with the Community Immigrant Support Centre, you had a meeting, and you were very enthusiastic, you went, you went and I never thought you gonna go all the places…so I'm grateful for that (Mona, personal communication, May 1, 2012).

Re-thinking reciprocity

Perhaps my definition of reciprocity was too narrow when I began this project. I thought that reciprocity could only be achieved if the community-based partner contributed substantially to the inception and planning phase of the project. In this case, Mona was enthusiastic to participate and saw clearly that the project's objectives aligned with her professional and personal mandate of assisting newcomers. If I had measured reciprocity by more vocal and engaged collaboration, I might never have gotten the project underway. Being

respectful and inviting but at the same time guiding may not, as Mona's example illustrates, completely negate reciprocity.

Reciprocity might also be measured by the benefits gained by community partners participating in the project. With this in mind, I questioned the community participants about their perceived benefits of the project during post-project interviews. In Mona's post-project interview she responded to this question in the following way:

> [The students] were listening to me. They were lovely. They were passionate. I always knew that we need to do that…what you are doing. We need to train our ESL teachers, our teachers also. By the time I came to school district I knew there was a huge need [to teach teachers about cross-cultural communication]…and even I didn't have that much knowledge of school district. But when I went to many different schools I felt how I've been treated[2], even as a person working in the district…they didn't know about my program, it wasn't important to them…a second language…you know who cares about that…I felt such an isolation…school staff is not used to immigration (Mona, personal communication, May 1, 2012).

Mona recognizes the need for teachers to have more cross-cultural awareness, and that school staff and teachers need to understand the resources that exist in the community that serve new Canadian students and their families. Mona expresses her thoughts that working with preservice teachers is a way to embed cross-cultural training into the very agents who will be working with newcomers. I feel that in this way, Mona's work in the community and her observations and objectives are connected and related to my own objectives as a teacher-educator. Furthermore, Mona appears to feel validated by the university, as seen by her initial reaction to the project. She articulates certain gratitude that someone, in this case a university

[2] Mona is an immigrant herself and at times made reference to the discrimination she experienced when she first started working in schools.

instructor, was seeking expertise from her and her organization in order to address the very issues that she herself identifies as problematic within the school system.

Although it feels uncomfortable to admit this, I think Mona believes that being validated by the university was a benefit of this partnership. My discomfort in identifying this comes from trying to move away from a traditional understanding that the university is situated above the community on a power and privilege hierarchy. Indeed, I believed that I was helping to break down this power differential by working more collaboratively with the community. But what arises here is Mona's expression of her appreciation of the university seeking her out as an expert and co-educator, and the sense of validation that results. As counter-intuitive and uncomfortable as it makes me feel, this appreciation and validation appears to be a benefit to this project experienced by more than one community participant.

Margaret

Feeling validated by the university was an issue also raised by Margaret, one of the community-based partners in this project. Margaret was a youth coordinator for a local non-profit organization where she facilitated a variety of programs for local immigrant youth aged 15-25. Margaret partnered with three different students from the course; one student worked with Margaret's homework club, and two other students worked in a youth leadership program that Margaret was facilitating. When asked about the benefits of participating with preservice teachers, Margaret, like Mona, alluded to the importance of the university becoming involved in her organization's programming:

> What was important for us I think was to know that...the university community was interested in what we were doing and wanted to learn more…I explained to

> the youth these are going to be your teachers one day…or going to be your peers' teachers so they've come to ... gain some perspective about what it's like to be you and what your needs are...And I think that was really enlightening for many of them because they were like 'that's really cool because our needs are being taken into consideration.' Because a lot of the times I do get some complaints from youth about teachers, and I sympathize with teachers because I know how under-resourced they are in school, and I know the ESL programs have often been cut so there's only one ESL teacher in the entire school responsible for like a growing population...I have interacted with ESL teachers on various levels and sometimes they haven't had experience working with newcomer youth before coming into the schools, and so like what's happening there? Like how are they being hired, how are they being trained? And so it's a really interesting dynamic...from the youth's perspective to see university students come in; they're like, 'oh we don't know university students'...This is really cool that they're coming in to train and this is part of their training. So for that I think it was really beneficial for us (Margaret, personal communication, April 19, 2012).

Here Margaret suggests that the benefit to participating in this project is two-fold. Like Mona, Margaret acknowledges that it was "important" to her that the university was interested in what the youth she was working with were doing. This comment reinforces a sense of differential positioning between community programming and the university. Once again, a community partner expresses a sense of validation by having the university's interest in their program.

Despite not wanting to reinforce a differentiation in power between myself, an agent of the university, and someone like Margaret, a youth facilitator in the community, I cannot deny the implication of what Margaret articulates as an advantage of this partnership. The implication is that an imbalance between the university and the community exists, the university being seen as the validating agent in the partnership. As condescending as it sounds, and as uncomfortable as it makes me to recognize, I believe that in Margaret's eyes I was validating Margaret, her youth, and her programming by seeking their collaboration in the

project. And this validation, in addition to being seen as evidence of the power differential that exists between universities and communities, is also seen by Margaret and Mona as an advantage of the project and a benefit to collaboration.

Margaret also suggests that partnering with preservice teachers was "really cool" and "beneficial" because she has experienced complaints about teachers from the youth she works with. In the above excerpt, Margaret recounts having heard stories about teachers not having any experience with newcomer youth prior to becoming teachers, as well as stories that illustrate difficulties between teachers and newcomer youth. In terms of this project, Margaret sees the value of partnering with preservice teachers as giving her organization and its youth influence over the education of these teachers. In many ways, Margaret and the youth she serves became co-educators in this course, contributing to the education of these preservice teachers by sharing their stories, their concerns, and their ideas about what it means to be an ESL learner and a new Canadian. By collaborating in this way, Margaret and her youth potentially influenced the knowledge and understanding of preservice teachers, and it is this influence that could lead to lessening the challenges and misunderstandings that newcomer youth face as they transition into the school system.

Emily

Another community-based participant that partnered with the course was Emily. Emily was the facilitator of an immigrant youth group affiliated with the Community Immigrant Support Centre (CISC). Emily was helping this particular youth group with a photo-journalism project in which members of the group were interviewing other immigrant youth in the community regarding the challenges they faced when coming to Canada. The data from these

interviews were going to be used to make a variety of print and visual resources for newcomer youth to be distributed to other youth groups and schools. Two students from my course, Jaime and Colin, partnered with Emily and her group by participating in youth-led discussions and brainstorming sessions that helped structure the final interviews of the photo-journalism project.

When asked about the benefits of the project, Emily, the youth group facilitator, commented:

> It was great just to have extra people for the focus group but, I mean, the bigger picture was I think it's great to get teachers in training...to have exposure doing community-based projects, specifically what I was doing with immigrant youth because a lot of that stuff was related to their education and their school system, the challenges they had there—I figured that was going to be a really interesting thing for them to kind of take part in and hopefully take away some of the things—because these kids are always making recommendations—the things they'd like to see change in their schools so that kind of thing…it was great to have them there and it was really beneficial for that focus group to have the extra people (Emily, personal communication, April 20, 2012).

Both Margaret and Emily, although working with different immigrant youth groups, acknowledge the importance of connecting preservice teachers with the youth they will one day be working with. Specifically, both of these community-based participants refer to issues that youth face in schools. Margaret mentions that she hears complaints about teachers from the youth she works with, and Emily mentions that the youth she works with have discussed challenges they faced in schools and the recommendations they have. Clearly, for both of these youth facilitators, it is important to connect these two groups—immigrant youth and prospective teachers—in meaningful ways in order to address the challenges that immigrant

youth face in their school environments, challenges that are articulated in out-of-school environments like youth groups.

Indeed, all youth, immigrant or not, will probably have challenges in schools, but perhaps by connecting them in projects such as these they are provided with opportunities to share stories and perspectives that result in both groups becoming more aware of the needs of the other. As articulated by both Margaret and Emily, a benefit of connecting immigrant youth and preservice teachers is that preservice teachers hear the stories and the struggles of immigrant youth. In this way, youth are given a voice to share their perspectives with future teachers, and future teachers are given a chance to listen and to connect these stories with their own prior and emerging pedagogical understandings and experiences. In sharing their perspectives, both youth and preservice teachers have an opportunity to create knowledge and understanding through situated dialogue and sharing.

Emily also addressed another benefit of participating in the project when she summarized the importance of preservice teachers working in the community:

> I think it's just good to have the opportunity to realize that the community exists especially when you're kind of insulated in a program...where you are working in the community but you're working in the community in a very limited way—the school is really its own community and it's important I think to give people the opportunity to realize there is a community around the school they're working in where educational things are happening and there's potential there for collaboration and everything, but if you don't know it exists then....(Emily, personal communication, April 20, 2012).

According to Emily, the benefits here seem to be for the students in the course rather than for the immigrant youth themselves. Unfortunately, I did not interview the youth themselves to ask their opinion of how working with the preservice teachers from this study benefitted them.

Perhaps, as Margaret mentions, this experience was a chance for some youth to participate in co-constructing understandings with emerging teachers. And the hope is that these stories will inform understandings that will help improve the quality of education for future ESL students by helping future teachers and administrators understand their needs, their communities, and opportunities for partnership and collaboration with these communities in the future.

Eileen

Eileen was another community-based participant who shared her understanding of the benefits of partnering with preservice teachers. Eileen was an ESL specialist in the local school district. She taught ESL in local public schools, usually conducting pull-out classes to small groups of students. Eileen participated in the project by partnering with two different groups of students. Each group met with her, observed her teaching, helped to facilitate small group lessons, and conducted informal interviews with Eileen. When asked about the benefits for her in participating in the project, Eileen explained that sharing her knowledge with preservice teachers was the biggest benefit for her.

> From my end...maybe nothing that I'm getting, but something I can give…like if I can assist someone in helping them—like mentor or whatnot in that position and let them know that these are the things you might experience...they also had questions about how do you apply for things and this and that, and it was aside from the ESL but I showed them you just go through this—it's like a shopping cart….(Eileen, personal communication, April 26, 2012).

During this post-course interview, Eileen explained that as a preservice teacher she never had the experience of working with an ESL specialist, and that as a specialist she does not get to work with practicum students. This exposure to ESL specialists, according to Eileen, is beneficial for all future teachers in order to understand the roles ESL specialists play and the

resources they provide in schools—resources that, according to Eileen many classroom teachers do not take full advantage of. Eileen describes this challenge of collaboration as follows:

> From my experience as an ESL specialist, the teachers that I have worked with have all been open to push-in and pull-out services. Sometimes, it comes down to scheduling, but also time. This year I have less hours at [one particular school] with more students being serviced. I was hoping to do more push-in service but was not able to do as much as I would have liked to do due to lack of time. As far as collaboration again, it mostly comes down to time. Being split between schools can sometimes have its challenges when it comes down to meeting with other teachers (Eileen, personal communication, January 23, 2013).

When I contacted Eileen almost a year after the project took place, she noted that her experience with collaboration was changing:

> However, this year I have been able to work more closely with many of the teachers. I have been doing a bit of team teaching. It has been a wonderful experience working together, bouncing ideas off of one another. Reflecting back on our interview last year, I can see how things have changed. Being the ESL Specialist for a second year has allowed me to reflect, review, and revise some of my programming, communication, and presentation (Eileen, personal communication, January 23, 2013).

In Eileen's case the benefits to her involve working with emerging teachers that, as an ESL specialist, she does not get the chance to do in a practicum setting. Obviously she values being able to mentor and aid emerging teachers, especially since there is little chance that a student-teacher will be paired with her during a more formal practicum. In this way, the benefits here to the community partner go beyond ESL, and connect preservice teachers to practicing teachers in a way that benefits the professional development of existing ESL teachers. Being able to share information, lesson plans, administrative information, and experiences helps Eileen reflect on her own practice and share her expertise in order to help teachers who will

one day be working with ESL students either in a mainstream classroom or in a pull-out environment. For this reason, the community-based partnership project not only acknowledges ESL specialists as an integral part of educating teachers of ESL learners, but also provides the opportunity for ESL specialists to contribute their knowledge and expertise in a way that, according to Eileen, gives back and helps her to mentor future teachers.

Connie

During the planning of this course, I came to know Connie, the facilitator of a newly formed immigrant women's support group. I learned about this group and about Connie during my initial meeting with Mona, the above-mentioned settlement worker from the SWIS program. In this particular partnership, the students from the course used their skill set and creativity to design and implement a cooking lesson. They used principles from class when designing the lesson, building in opportunities to teach target vocabulary.

After the lesson, all the participants sat down and enjoyed the food they had created and engaged in a dialogue on a variety of topics including the school system, communication with teachers, and ESL programming. The community participants shared their stories and concerns about the education system and their issues in communication with teachers. Connie sat in on this discussion and was able to learn about school-based challenges—an area that she had not yet explored with the women. In this way, the preservice teachers and their school-based and educational interests provided a perspective that helped inform Connie of the needs of her group members and would affect her programming in the future.

When interviewed post-course, Connie addressed the benefits of the project by suggesting that through their participation, students brought to the project a perspective that

helped to heighten her own understandings of what issues the women she works with are facing. Connie states:

> Just having, I would say, new perspectives for the organization. Okay, so like some of the questions they asked…they wanted to know what was important to them as parents and their kids being in the school system, and that was helpful for us…cause I've never asked that and it helps me know sort of where they're at and what they need so...their curiosity, their knowledge...(Connie, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

According to Connie, the student participants bring something valuable to the community in their perspective and their curiosity. Connie admitted that she has never asked the women in the group about their experiences in the education system. For Connie this partnership is a learning experience for her as well because the students are bringing questions and viewpoints to the dialogue, and this in turn is raising Connie's own awareness of the needs of the women in her group. Through this dialogue, a reciprocal exchange of knowledge highlights how the community organization, the facilitator and the student participants are balancing a sharing of information, skills and knowledge. As in previous examples, these community educators become co-educators alongside the instructor and the students, working together through interactions to inform and construct meaning.

Grace and Sumara

The knowledge and understandings that resulted from connecting parents of ESL learners with preservice teachers were strongly recycled throughout the responses to the project. In one particular example, three students from the course, Blair, Kim and Agnes, partnered with three different parents of ESL learners. They originally wanted to meet all the parents at once in order to hold a sort of round-table discussion on a variety of topics related to being a parent

of an ESL learner, but scheduling challenges made this arrangement difficult. In the end, the students met each parent at a different time, at a different coffee shop to discuss their experiences transitioning to life in Canada, and in particular their experiences transitioning to a new school culture.

After the course, I interviewed Grace, one of the parents who had worked with Blair, Kim and Agnes. I asked Grace about what she thought of the project, and in particular how she measured the benefits of meeting and talking with preservice teachers. In response to this question, Grace acknowledged the gaps in understanding that exist between parents and teachers:

> I do feel there is a need for the...school to work better with the students from a different—I wouldn't say a different country or different culture but some students who are coming from a family that are not familiar with Canadian education system—and part of the responsibility is on the shoulders of the teachers, part of the responsibility is with the parents, so I think I would like to meet future teachers—at least some of them [so they] know my perspective and how that will work--every single one change is a small change (Grace, personal communication, April 19, 2012).

Furthermore, Grace also discussed how her own awareness of preservice teachers was informed by this project, illustrating another example of how the project was a collaborative, co-educational experience for the community-based participants. Grace explains what she learned from this project in the following excerpt:

> Actually, I was surprised as well because I think once we were talking about [the inability of immigrant parents to have the time and resources to volunteer as drivers in the schools] they are so surprised and that shocks me...I was so surprised they were so surprised…you know, like I thought I was surprised that they never thought that there are people out there who don't drive and there are people out there who didn't volunteer because they want to make a contribution but they can't...I really enjoyed that talk with them. I learned…

> sometimes as a parent we have a misunderstanding, sometimes you could potentially put the blame on the teacher but on the other side after this I'm thinking the teacher just may never thought of that and I think there is a need for communication to understand from both sides…I wouldn't stereotype but the profession of a teacher is heavily coming from a certain type of class and their way of thinking might be you know coming from their background as well…they are younger than I thought…you know what I mean? They are still kids and that's eye-opening for me (Grace, personal communication, April 19, 2012).

Finally, Grace reiterates the importance of connecting teachers and parents through projects like this by stating:

> It gives them the opportunity to meet the real parents and to hear...from their perspective. I think it would be beneficial at least for the teachers' point of view to see a real person and what their life might look like, what their background might look like, and actually what they could bring to the table...to make connections with the parents. Another benefit is for these young teachers beginning in their profession to have a understanding of the diversity in our society. We socialize with people we are familiar with so this is a good opportunity to make a bridge to reach someone you don't not necessarily socialize with, and it's a good opportunity to understand the parent's needs in a sense. Every parent's needs is different but this is a good opportunity just to hear from someone (Grace, personal communication, April 19, 2012).

For Grace, the benefit of the meeting with preservice teachers is to help inform future teachers of the differences and perspectives that parents of ESL learners bring to their children's education. She acknowledges that many preservice teachers may not have experience working with parents, especially parents of ESL learners, and that it is important for preservice teachers to connect with them and hear their stories in order to understand their needs, and the needs of their children.

Furthermore, Grace feels that she learned about the perspective of preservice teachers and this helped shape her own understandings of where teachers are coming from, and what they might know and not know regarding ESL learners. This mutual sharing, according to Grace,

encourages a better and clearer understanding of parents, their children, and preservice teachers. Both Grace and Connie articulate how the project affected their understanding and perspectives, illustrating the mutual co-sharing of knowledge that is clearly a benefit to all participants in this project. As I will discuss later, these benefits were consistent with those also articulated by Blair, Kim, and Agnes, the three preservice teachers that met with Grace.

Sumara was another parent that was interviewed by the same group of students. Sumara, however, responds slightly differently to the question on how this project may have benefitted her. For Sumara, the benefits include learning about what other parents who were not born in Canada thought about the school system:

> I was surprised to know even they're not born in Canada, they were fine with the [school] system and I'm surprised they're not complaining as much. I don't know why but they were not too particular about homework and all that like me and I was surprised. It made me question myself like am I being too particular about these things or maybe me and my husband with our background and education are we pushing our child too far. That was surprising and I was talking to my husband after and I was like, 'I hope you're not pushing [our child] too much' (Sumara, personal communication, April 16, 2012).

Sumara also comments on raising awareness of future teachers so that they will not ignore her concerns in the future:

> …I think [sharing my stories] would be nice because the teachers won't ignore it. The reason I'm saying so is because when I went to see my doctor [the doctor] said I should talk to the teacher so that she can plan curriculum as for his needs. I spoke to the teacher and she said, 'No in kindergarten we don't worry about that—just play and all that stuff we focus more on social thing rather than on education thing. I was not happy with that but I said okay social is fine, but ...maybe instead of giving him 1-10 give him some extra sums, but maybe she didn't want to, and I think in such cases teachers will ...I know that different people come from different backgrounds--they have different expectations and maybe because they have that thing going back in their head they push their child so much that maybe their kids can do that, so if they design curriculum [or] modify curriculum a bit that would motivate kids, they won't be ignorant of this

> fact that there are people who have certain expectations (Sumara, personal communication, April 16, 2012).

During her discussion with the three student participants, Sumara confided in them that she was so far unhappy with many aspects of the school system. She felt that her son was not receiving enough academic support and that the elementary school that he attended spent too much time in play-based activities. She also reported that she has had some difficulties communicating with teachers about her expectations and needs. For all of these reasons, she felt the benefit to participating in this project was being able to share this perspective with emerging teachers in order to raise their awareness that "different people come from different backgrounds and have different expectations." Furthermore, she acknowledges that other benefits might come in the future, when upon hearing concerns like Sumara's, preservice teachers will choose not to "ignore it."

Benefits to the Students

In addition to asking community-based participants about the perceived advantages of participating in this project, I was also interested in the student participants' perspectives. Specifically, I wanted to know what students would identify as beneficial to participating in such a project, if anything. As well, I wondered what they would see as the challenges or limitations of the project. In this section, I discuss these perceived benefits from the perspective of the students in the course, as identified in their reflective journals, final assignments and post-course questionnaires. These perceived benefits include making real connections between theory and practice, re-envisioning the community as a resource, raising awareness of ESL

learners, and influencing preservice teachers' professional directions toward more ESL-focused areas.

Making connections between theory and practice

A major category that emerged from analyzing the data was that many of the student participants felt that working in the community gave them a valuable opportunity to link theory with practice. Making education practical, and seeing the theory connected to relevant experience in the community is not a new idea; this argument can be heard in early educational theorists such as Franklin Bobbitt and John Dewey. An early voice in the curriculum dialogue, Bobbitt (2004) connected education with experience, expressing that much of one's education is achieved through participation in experience in community life. Dewey (2004) builds upon Bobbitt's connection between the learner and society when he expresses the notion that education serves both the student and the community, and does so through the actual life experience of the learner. Linking theory with practice has always been an integral part of teacher education, but is most often achieved through structured school-based practica. As the data below illustrate, being able to link theory and practice may also be achieved in less formal, community-based environments.

The students who enrolled in this course were not simultaneously engaged in any practicum or other community-based endeavour except perhaps for a small number of students who volunteered of their own accord. Often, even when preservice teachers are engaged in a practicum it is not at a time when they are simultaneously taking classes. For this reason, much of what preservice teachers learn in the university classroom remains inapplicably stagnated; they cannot apply their knowledge at the same time through observation and interaction in

real-life situations. Opportunities to see how the theory, if at all, becomes practice—within real spaces and during the same time as their coursework—was clearly identified by students as an advantage of participating in this community-based project.

When asked to comment on what the advantages were in participating in the community-based project and assignment, many student responses alluded to being able to make connections between theory and practice. Being situated in the community and interacting with people and places appeared to help a number of students see how some of the theory and concepts from the course could be seen and applied in real life. In many ways, the theory seemed to make sense to students once they saw it happening, and they recorded this illustration of theory in their reflective journals and other assignments. I draw from Lucy's reflective journal as an illustration of this phenomenon.

Lucy

Lucy partnered with a local non-profit organization that facilitated a homework club for newcomer youth. Lucy connected with the facilitator of the group before her placement to determine her role in the homework club and to organize the best time for Lucy to participate. Lucy was then able to observe and participate in the homework club, as well as debrief afterwards with Margaret, the group's facilitator. When Lucy visited the homework club, there were 10 students aged 15-18. She participated in group activities and then worked individually with a number of students, assisting them with their homework as well as discussing their experiences transitioning to a new country and a new school.

In her reflection on the experience, Lucy illustrates how her understandings are deepened through the connections she sees between certain material from the course (a documentary and subsequent discussion) and her experiences in the homework club:

> For example, I spoke to a girl from Sri Lanka, who wishes she could go back and doesn't have any Canadian friends. Others stated that they were glad to be in Canada, though they have found it very difficult to learn a new language and make friends. During these conversations I was reminded of the video "The Storytelling Class," since despite the diversity of the school featured, the students within it were fairly segregated. Just like some of the students from the video, the Homework Club teens expressed feelings of frustration about the fact that their only friends are other immigrants and refugees from their home countries. When I am a teacher I will need to be conscious of this trend and do whatever I can to open up conversations between students from diverse backgrounds. By teaching students about acceptance and respect while they are in school, I hope that I can help them to be multiculturally-minded citizens when they graduate (Lucy, personal communication[3], April, 2012).

Lucy continues to discuss the benefits of linking theory to practice when she discusses her emerging understandings of the BICS-CALP[4] model of conceptualizing second language acquisition, another more theoretical concept addressed in the classroom-based portion of our course.

> [The experience] challenged my assumption that it is better to immigrate when young. I always assumed that students will have a better chance at fluency if they begin learning the new language as early as possible. This course and community based placement helped me to understand that young children may sound fluent but never truly gain full comprehension of the new language, whereas older students will benefit from already having one language firmly (or at least adequately) mastered. Even though the older students may have accents they will essentially be more fluent than their younger counterparts (BICS-CALP model). I was able to actually see this theory in practice when I observed at the Homework Club, which was a really neat way of connecting my understandings (Lucy, personal communication, April, 2012).

[3] For student participants, personal communication refers to reflective assignments or post-course questionnaires, not interviews.

[4] BICS-CALP stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills-Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. The BICS-CALP framework was is a model of conceptualizing the stages of language acquisition that learners go through as they progress from basic communication skills to more academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1982).

Lucy draws parallels between course material and her experiences, finding connections that appear to illustrate what was discussed in class as well as inform her reflections on her future teaching. Being able to revisit the idea that ESL learners feel segregated within schools provides her with the chance to experience course-based material contextualized through social interaction and dialogue. In this case, the material concerns the challenges ESL learners face, and this knowledge is clearly influencing Lucy's reflection on her future teaching.

Experience in the homework club helped Lucy understand theory which can be abstract, decontextualized, and for lack of a better term, somewhat boring. Seeing the theory in practice inevitably makes it meaningful for students. As Lucy explains, the readings, the frameworks, and the text-based ideas related to teaching ESL begin to make sense. When those theoretical components begin to make sense, I believe the students will remember them, be affected by them, and be informed by them in a more concrete and transformative way. Being able to see content from class illustrated experientially and meaningfully outside the classroom is clearly a benefit for students who participated in these community-based learning experiences.

Connecting with families

"For our community-based placement we focused on a group that is often forgotten: the ESL parent" (Blair, personal communication, April, 2012).

In analyzing the data from this study, I noticed student participants starting to understand on a deeper level connections between ESL pedagogy and ESL students, their families, and other community-based resources, respectively. Reiterated throughout the interviews, assignments and questionnaires was an emerging awareness that behind ESL learners there are other people, ways of knowing, and communities who affect and shape

those learners, and in turn can provide perspective on ESL teaching and learning. Furthermore, it is clear that the project—going into the community and engaging with people and resources and then reflecting on the process—encouraged student participants to construct a more multi-dimensional understanding of the lived experience of an ESL learner. ESL learners were no longer decontextualized and clichéd images from a textbook on multiculturalism. They were real people—students with parents and grandparents and cultures and strengths. In this project, many student participants discussed how working with parents, specialists, youth, adults and non-profit organizations informed a more holistic understanding of who ESL learners are, what resources exist beyond schools for them, and how teachers can collaborate with these resources in order to support ESL learners.

Kim, Blair and Agnes

Kim, Blair, and Agnes partnered with three parents of ESL children. These three students met with each parent at different times, and in different places, in order to maintain an informal aspect to the discussion. Although they were in essence interviewing these parents in order to understand more fully their experiences coming to Canada and transitioning into the school system, they wanted the meetings to be relaxed and more of a discussion or chat than a formal interview. The students engaged with these parents in a discussion about their experiences as newcomers, paying specific attention to experiences with their school-aged children. Prior to the placement, I had identified three parent volunteers willing to meet in a focus group-like discussion with preservice teachers. After their meetings, the students reflected on the experience and on what the parents discussed, attempting to make

connections between this experience and their emerging values and understandings as preservice teachers.

What surfaces from the students' reflections is a self-identified increase in understanding of the families of ESL learners, and the importance of building relationships through effective communication between parents and teachers. In her reflection of her experience, Kim writes how the project affected this understanding of communication between parents and teachers:

> The biggest commonality between all three parents, and arguably the most important thing that I took away from this experience, was the focus on lack of communication. I was honestly baffled at how little communication with the teacher these parents have. We are taught in every class how important communication with parents is, and I think that regardless of the student's situation communication should be a priority. In the case of ESL parents, where a language barrier, a cultural barrier, or both, are present, it becomes that much more important. In the case of Sumara, a cultural difference has created an area of frustration for her and the lack of communication and concern on behalf of the teacher only perpetuates the problem (Kim, personal communication, April, 2012).

In the above reflection, Kim acknowledges the increased importance of communicating with parents of ESL learners because of barriers such as language and culture. She highlights the importance of cultural barriers by referring to her conversations with Sumara, and in particular Sumara's frustration with her son's teacher because of perceived cultural differences. Kim is constructing her knowledge by organizing her experiences and her conversations in terms of "commonalities" between the parents she spoke with. In this case, she identifies communication as a category emerging from her analysis.

Another member of the same student group, Agnes, also expresses her interpretation of the experience as it relates to communicating with parents:

> Looking back through all three interviews, the most appealing part was our "questioning" moments. One [parent] would state something a teacher did or didn't do, and we would all be taken back by what we were told. For example, we didn't understand why a teacher never provided contact information, why a teacher never supported the [excelling] kindergarten student and adapt the material to accommodate and challenge his areas of strength, or why the parent never even knew that her son was enrolled in an ESL class. We were all surprised that there was an apparent lack of communication. These questioning moments were also reinforcing moments – it made me feel more confident in what I knew, and allowed me to reflect on my own pedagogical outlook. The information gathered in these interviews is information that I don't think I would have received elsewhere…I did not realize the impact of [parent-teacher interaction] on a family prior to meeting with these parents (Agnes, personal communication, April, 2012).

Like Kim, Agnes is searching for commonalities in the experiences and stories of the parents she met in order to make meaning and inform her pedagogy. Agnes acknowledges in her reflective journal that she liked the moments that surprised her or caused her to question how existing teachers were interacting with the parents of ESL learners. Agnes admits that these shocking moments also made her feel more confident. I interpret this statement as meaning that she realizes that she would never do what the teachers described would do (i.e., not tell a parent that a student was in enrolled in an ESL class, or not challenge a gifted ESL learner). I like to believe that Agnes will not be like the teacher discussed, in part because she has had this very experience to influence her. Even Agnes admits that the information gathered in these interviews would not have been received elsewhere. Acknowledging the uniqueness of this information in this way also informs me as an instructor of the value of facilitating these interviews and subsequent reflections.

Elsewhere in her journal, Agnes describes the intersections of culture and communication, and her evolving ideas around using first languages in the classroom:

> All three parents felt very strongly about maintaining their native cultures and having their children grow up being familiar with both cultures. Specifically, all three families now include their native language in their homes and leave the English learning to be done at school. While talking to Grace she mentioned that her son had a very difficult time making friends when he first arrived, as he did not speak any English. She wished that the teacher had allowed him to communicate with other students from China so that he could have made friends easier. This is an ongoing debate: to allow students to speak their native language in the classroom or to demand that they speak English. Prior to meeting with these parents I felt that these students should be really encouraged to only speak English, however, after hearing Grace's story I now see another side to this. While having them speak their native language may slow down their English learning, it will help them feel welcomed and comfortable at school which in turn will help them to become better learners. I now think that when I have my own classroom with ESL students, I will allow my students to speak their native language during some designated times of the day (Agnes, personal communication, April, 2012).

Agnes is again attempting to see patterns arising out of her interviews with parents of ESL learners. In this case, the commonality is the importance to these three families of maintaining their culture, and specifically their first language. Agnes focuses on Grace's example to illustrate how Agnes is changing her mind about whether or not to "allow" native languages in class. During our in-class time, a heated debate arose from an article that suggested it was appropriate to allow ESL learners to speak their first language in the classroom. Many students in class disagreed with this point, and admitted that they thought their jobs as teachers of ESL learners was to encourage the exclusive use of English. Other students in the class thought that there was comfort in letting students speak their first language. In Agnes' case, she describes how her opinion has changed from not letting students speak their first language at all to allowing them to speak their first language during designated times of the day. Clearly, a progression of learning is taking place and Agnes' softening is due, it appears, to her interaction with Grace and being informed by Grace's story. However, Agnes has only budged a little as

seen in her use of “allow” and “during designated times of the day.” She still sees speaking one’s first language as a privilege allowed, or perhaps controlled by her and by designated times.

Finally, the third member of the group, Blair, focuses on the importance of communication and relationship building with parents:

> *This experience has opened my mind to realizing the true value and importance of parents in a students’ education. I feel as though I am more aware of their role within the education system, and how their involvement affects the student. I began to realize the significance and positive impact behind making a connection and building a relationship with each parent in the classroom. I feel as though the relationship needs to be established on day one, as its imperative in creating an inclusive classroom environment. As a teacher, you need to be welcoming and approachable, and provide your parents with the necessary contact information. Invite them to be a member of your classroom community, and make an effort to reach out to them, get to know them, and keep them updated* (Blair, personal communication, April. 2012).

In the above excerpt, Blair never once refers to “ESL learners,” rather just to students and parents. Issues related to relationship building, respect and communication that have emerged from her experiences in the community are being generalized to all students. In this way, the community is influencing preservice teachers in deep and generalizable ways that speak to the benefits not just to ESL learners, but to all learners and their families.

As the course instructor I could have stood before the class and told them about some of the issues that parents of ESL learners face when transitioning to a new school system. Instead, I helped facilitate this parent-preservice teacher meeting, and provided a physical and dialogical moment between these two groups where stories were shared and perspectives shaped. I believe, as I think the students and community participants also believe, that coming together in this way is more powerful and meaningful than third party interpretations such as

lectures on the subject. With these stories and experiences, the students are becoming more aware of what parents and their children need and expect from teachers, namely good communication.

Connecting with community-based resources

In addition to an increased awareness of parents as integral agents in the lives of ESL learners, other students identified a similar heightened awareness of community-based resources by participating in this project.

Shauna and Nora

Shauna and Nora were students from the course who worked together with a local non-profit organization's (the Cultural Access Centre or CAC) youth leadership group. This group for newcomer youth focuses on leadership skills. Shauna and Nora worked with the youth leadership facilitator to observe and later facilitate part of the group. In their reflections, Nora and Shauna describe how the knowledge of this organization informs them of other issues related to being a newcomer, as well as issues related to teaching ESL. They recount their experiences here:

> We were astonished by the network of services available to immigrants and refugees provided by the CAC. Never had we thought about how difficult it would be to establish oneself in a new country. There are so many aspects of Canadian life to consider (housing, B.C. transit, grocery shopping, registering children for school, etc.) that CAC helps immigrants and refugees with. Our visit to the CAC has changed our perspective of what it means to move to a new country. We now see how important is to have organizations like the CAC to help these newcomers…there are so many great services offered such as settlement workers, English classes for all ages, clubs for students, daycare services, etc. We will carry what we learned from this visit with us into our careers as teachers. This experience has helped us to attain a better understanding of what our future ESL students might be going through…As preservice teachers it is important to be aware of this type of organization and the services they provide, in order to direct your students towards resources

> that could benefit them (Shauna and Nora, personal communication, April, 2012).

In the above excerpt, Nora and Shauna focus on two main points emerging from their community-based experience. First, they acknowledge a new awareness of the services and resources available to newcomers. By being exposed to the existence of these services and resources, Nora and Shauna begin to create a new picture of what newcomers experience when they arrive in a new community, something they admit they had not really considered previously. Seeing how CAC supports newcomers encourages Nora and Shauna to reflect on the needs of new Canadians, as well as how knowledge of these services might influence how they as teachers interact and collaborate with students, their families and organizations like CAC in the future.

Kelly

Similar responses were made by Kelly, a student-participant who partnered with Mona and Issa, two school-based settlement workers. Mona and Issa work specifically within the school district to assist newcomer families settle into both the community as well as into the school system. Mona and Issa provide resources to families, students, teachers, and administrators and exist to make the transitions of newcomers as easy as possible. Kelly went to the settlement workers' school-based offices and observed and interviewed them. In her reflection, Kelly also describes the experience in terms of how it raised her awareness of such resources in the community, and why those resources are important to emerging teachers:

> It never crossed my mind as to how much an immigrant family had to go through and the struggles that they experienced as they entered Canada. As these families would come and meet with different school principals, classroom teachers, or ESL

> specialists, they would all eventually be directed to contact or meet with Mona. She became their lifeline to this new and mysterious country. It really amazed us as to how important her job was to so many different families in our area. Mona showed a strong passion to help every family get what they needed, from education needs to formal government documentation. She demonstrated a great deal of empathy to the families and what they may be going through. And to think that this program has only been [going] for seven years; what did immigrant families have to go through before Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) was brought out here? (Kelly, personal communication, April, 2012).

In this example, Kelly, like Nora and Shauna, admits that she has not really considered the experiences of ESL families prior to this experience, that it has never really crossed her mind. By talking to Mona and Issa, however, she begins to see how important settlement workers are to families and how much families rely on Mona. Just as Kelly wonders what newcomers did prior to the SWIS program being offered, I wonder what preservice teachers do prior to engaging in the community. How, if at all, will preservice teachers come to understand and appreciate aspects of the newcomer experience if they only ever learn in a classroom?

Through an increased understanding of resources like the SWIS program and CAC, Nora, Shauna and Kelly are beginning to piece together a picture of what it means to be a newcomer and transition to a new community. This increased understanding and empathy will hopefully inform Kelly's future interactions with the ESL learners in her class, as well as those learners' families. Furthermore, hopefully Kelly's new connection with settlement workers will lead to future collaborations, or at the very least provide Kelly with a place to go and a person to connect with if she needs the services of a settlement worker.

Disrupting assumptions with community-based knowledge

"In order to teach you, I must know you" (Delpit, 1995).

Delpit (1995) expresses the idea that it is important for teachers to know their students both academically and personally by acknowledging and using students' cultural backgrounds in the classroom. Consistent with Delpit's ideas is the finding here that many student participants agreed that "putting a face" to their future ESL students was a benefit to the community-based project. In this way, students build relationships with members beyond the classroom that are connected to their learning, and these relationships inform their understandings of ESL learners through a social constructivist lens.

Kim, Blair, Erin and Paige

Kim, one the students who partnered with parents of ESL children, discusses how the project challenged her assumption that ESL parents would be interested in coming into the classroom to discuss their cultures:

> The biggest assumption that was challenged for me was that previous to this placement, I assumed that all ESL parents would love to come in and talk with the class about their culture and volunteer and help out. I was shocked to hear all three parents state that they had not really participated in the class nor did they want to. I assumed that they would be open and willing to share about their culture, however, after speaking with these women I now understand just how intimidating that would be and that in most cases they do not have the time to participate as they are starting new jobs, finding new homes (Kim, personal communication, May 2012).

For Kim, meeting with parents of ESL learners challenged the assumption that parents would love to come into the class and discuss their culture. In classroom-based discussion, members of the course suggested more than once that by inviting parents into the classroom, teachers could acknowledge different cultures and help to inform other students of the diversity that existed in a classroom. This sounded to Kim like a great idea, and she admits assuming that parents of diverse learners would almost be honoured to come and talk about their culture.

This assumption, however, was challenged by her experiences in the community interacting with parents and asking them about this exact assumption. Kim admits a new understanding, an empathetic one, regarding the intimidating nature of such an activity, and a realization that not generalizing that all parents would be comfortable with or available to give cultural presentations is an important point of learning emerging from this experience.

In her post-course questionnaire, Blair, a member of the same group, addresses empathy and understanding by acknowledging the importance of understanding the people in ESL learners' lives. For Blair, the experience of meeting with parents of ESL learners led to a greater awareness of the existence and importance of the families of ESL learners:

> For me, I had always made the misguided assumption that ESL revolved around the learner and I never considered how the other people in that learner's life may be affected. In our placement, learning from the parents about their struggles and opinions of their child's learning was interesting and I found it to be an invaluable view of not just ESL learning but also of the Canadian education system. I think this placement challenged me to extend my thinking beyond the student and beyond the classroom, and realize that there is so much more to consider when teaching any student (Blair, personal communication, May, 2012).

In her response, Blair focuses on how her community-based experience made her think much deeper about the lives of ESL learners beyond the classroom. Blair points out that this new knowledge is not specific to only ESL learners, but is affecting her understanding of what she considers when "teaching any student."

In a similar way, Erin, a student who worked with an ESL specialist, identified previous fears that were dispelled by working with ESL students:

> In addition, this placement challenged my fear that making connections with ESL students would be more difficult because we have such different backgrounds.

> However, in my placement these students came from very different backgrounds and we were still able to make a connection. I know with some students it may be difficult but I now realize it is not impossible (Erin, personal communication, May, 2012).

For Erin, the community-based experience helped to challenge her fear that because she is not an ESL learner, and comes from a "different" background, she would have trouble connecting with her students. Although it is unclear from her response, I wonder that if by working with ESL learners, she actually made some connections with students. Being able to interact with students, make connections, and dispel some of her fears are all benefits to the social-interactive nature of this community-based experience.

In a similar way, the following example from Paige, a student working within a local school, illustrates how her assumptions about students had been altered through this project:

> I guess I assumed most ESL learners [here] were from Asia. It was interesting to see that this isn't the case. Caucasians all over the world speak different languages and therefore this was challenged. I also thought that it may be necessary for students to forget about their first language and not develop it but I learned how necessary a foundation in their first language is to learn English (Paige, personal communication, May, 2012).

For Paige, the community-based experience reminded her that ESL learners are not all Asian. This is a significant point of learning for her that is constructed directly by participation in the community. Paige also addresses the idea previous talked about in Agnes' reflection concerning the use of first languages in the classroom. Paige's assumption that students should forget their first languages is challenged by this experience and she acknowledges that through the experience she learned that first languages are a necessary foundation for language development.

All of these examples highlight how student participants identify that being outside the classroom and inside the community leads to observing, discussing, and engaging in a way that raises an awareness of learners and that challenges certain assumptions. Clearly the opportunity to observe and listen is helping students understand ESL learners beyond the theory of second language acquisition and lesson planning.

In these examples, students describe their perceived benefits in terms of how the project was challenging their assumptions and raising their awareness of the families and some of the difficulties ESL learners are confronting by connecting to ESL learners, something that is difficult to achieve remotely in a university classroom alone. By interacting socially in the community, their knowledge is being informed by listening and collaborating with others. Their understandings emerge from social constructivist processes that provide a situated and interactive means by which to build their knowledge of ESL teaching and learning.

Professional directions

Another category emerging from the data relates to preservice teachers and the shaping of their professional directions. In particular, a number of students suggested that participating in community-based partnerships has influenced their possible future professional direction.

Charlene, Rhonda, Kate and Rachel

Charlene, a student who partnered with an ESL specialist, comments in her reflective assignment how the experience led her to think about the value and possibility of being an ESL specialist in the future:

> Because I have learned how valuable and rewarding it is to be an ESL specialist I would highly consider being an ESL specialist. I would like to continue and take

> the second course so that I have more options and am able to be a better teacher (Charlene, personal communication, May, 2012).

Charlene was not the only student who began to consider the possibility of becoming an ESL specialist. Since the completion of this course, I have had three students contact me and ask about subsequent courses and education that would benefit them in becoming ESL specialists. I believe that the exposure to ESL specialists raises awareness to this aspect of teaching and the possibility of exploring it as a professional designation. In Charlene's case, the experience influences her in terms of being "valuable" and "rewarding," and she is therefore encouraged to think about becoming an ESL specialist in the future.

Besides those thinking of becoming ESL specialists, some students also suggested that the project influenced them professionally. After completing her community-based project with an ESL specialist, Rhonda reflected in her journal by making reference to her new interest in working with vulnerable populations:

> I am very interested in working with vulnerable populations in the future. These [community-based] presentations helped me to realize that immigrant families are a population that are in special need of support and care in our society; they are particularly vulnerable. I would consider working for an organization such as CAC or CISC in the future; as I feel it would be an area of passion for me. Also, I feel as though all of the skills I am gaining from being in the education program would have great use in this field, especially in the area of English language teaching. (Rhonda, personal communication, May, 2012).

Rhonda does not indicate how she would like to work with these organizations, but is stating that working for organizations such as CAC or CISC is "an area of passion" for her. She suggests that she would have something to offer the organizations because of her education skills and training. While this is an interesting finding within this study, more long-term follow-

up studies would have to be completed to see if this experience did indeed impact participants in terms of their professional interests.

Finally, Kate and Rachel discuss how the project was influencing their awareness of and interest in community-based volunteering and overseas teaching practicums:

> This was a new experience for us. Without this assignment we would never have had the chance to go out into the community and become involved. We were invited back to volunteer and are very excited about this opportunity. Based off our peer's presentations, it seems as though there are many great volunteer possibilities—something we had never considered before. We were also hoping to complete our third year practicum internationally to gain an even greater understanding of ESL teaching and expand our pedagogy. We both share a passion for travel and diversity with teaching overseas being a goal of ours. We are very interested in taking the second ESL course to become more qualified in pursuing this dream…and we feel that volunteering at CAC or other immigrant associations would be beneficial in pursuing this goal (Kate and Rachel, personal communication, April, 2012).

Kate and Rachel explain that they are also interested in taking "the second ESL course" offered by the department. Although there is another ESL course on the books, it is seldom if ever offered. Nonetheless, these students are expressing an interest in more courses in ESL teaching as well as pursuing an overseas practicum that would most likely have an ESL component. They are seeking to add more depth to their own learning, not just breadth.

In all of these examples, students comment on how the community-based course is influencing and shaping their future professional interests and goals. It appears that by working in the community, students are beginning to consider options, like specializing in ESL and working with adults that they may not have considered prior to this experience. Furthermore, in the last example, Kate and Rachel state that they are considering volunteering at a non-profit organization in order to reach their future professional goal of working overseas. Being made

aware of volunteer opportunities through their own experiences, as well as the experiences of classmates, is shaping the path to their future professional "dream" of teaching and travelling overseas.

In this section, I have attempted to describe how the student participants acknowledged how this project benefitted them and deepened their understandings of the people and the resources behind ESL learners. The data cited here attempt to paint a picture of how this project expanded knowledge and understanding of ESL learners by connecting preservice teachers to parents, families, settlement workers, and community-based groups. By engaging with these members, student participants were able to reflect on why these people and programs are important to teachers preparing to teach ESL learners. In their reflections, students commented on the importance of building relationships with families, communicating effectively and meaningfully with parents, learning about resources that help newcomers transition into local communities, learning about the lived experiences of ESL families, and considering possible future professional directions. Having discussed perceived benefits for community participants and student participants, I now turn to the benefits of implementing a community-based course from the perspective of the instructor, me.

Benefits to the Instructor

In designing this community-based course and in working on this research project, I was exposed to many resources in the community that help ESL learners and their families. My role as facilitator of the community-based experiences coupled with my role as primary researcher

on this project enabled and encouraged me to get off campus and meet with youth group facilitators, immigrant mothers, and ESL specialists. In doing this, I learned much about the process of building relationships, encouraging partnerships, and educating myself as a practitioner of ESL teaching and learning. Without going off campus and setting up partnerships, I would never have known about a number of projects being carried out in my own community. This process facilitated my own learning which I believe is critical in order to be an effective and informed instructor of this course and further, to provide a contribution to understanding of how to develop teacher education. It also led to me volunteering for one of the organizations which I partnered.

Fostering relationships, growing expertise, giving back

As mentioned earlier, one of the first people I contacted when I was organizing the community-based placements was Mona, a settlement worker for the local school district. I had worked previously with her predecessor and was actually trying to contact that predecessor when I first met Mona. This first meeting with Mona was the beginning of a networking process that would inform my own understandings of community-based teaching and learning, and affect my own professional development as an instructor, an ESL practitioner, and a graduate student.

Mona agreed to meet with me at her office, where I would introduce her to the project and encourage her to participate. I went to Mona to explain the course, the project, and the research I was hoping to do, eager that she would agree to participate. I had imagined that some of the students in the course could work with Mona in order to see what settlement workers do, and I hoped that Mona would be able to provide them with information about

newcomer families and the issues they face when arriving in Canada, as well as issues they face when they arrive at a new school. As it turned out, Mona was connected to perhaps every immigrant-related program being offered in the city. As I sat across from her, she listed numerous people and organizations that I had never heard of before. I scribbled notes hurriedly across my notebook, barely able to keep up with all of Mona's suggestions of other programs that could potentially gain from participating in this project. Mona was an immigrant herself and was passionately connected to the local immigrant community and committed to helping ESL learners in a variety of ways. She had connections to the two major non-profit organizations that serve immigrants and refugees locally, having worked with them on a variety of projects, and these projects became sources of potential partnerships within the course. By going to Mona's office and starting that conversation, I was growing my own expertise. Mona, on the other hand, was promoting a variety of community-based programs and potentially aiding these programs by creating future partnerships between me and them, and my students and them. How those partnerships would benefit the community-based programs was yet to be seen.

Meeting with Mona led to meetings with a number of other practitioners, and each time I would learn more about what was happening in the community in terms of ESL programming, as well as non-ESL programming. For example, one of these programs was an emerging community-based program for "isolated immigrant women." Learning about the program from Mona, I met with Connie, the facilitator of this group, to see if she would be interested in participating in the course. Connie had only just received funding for the program, and was interested in any partnerships between preservice teachers and the group. In particular, she

was interested in perhaps having students from the course implement some ESL lessons for the group as she had been unable to locate an ESL teacher for the group. Ultimately, the students who partnered with her planned an ESL cooking class and implemented it at community kitchen adjacent to where the group met weekly. All of the participants—students, facilitator, and immigrant women—shared in the food and participated in a discussion while they ate. When I later asked her why she wanted to participate, Connie commented:

> With this group I don't want to be the only facilitator or door into Canadian culture; I wanted other people to come and talk, and also I wanted somebody who was interested in ESL…the idea was that some of the ESL teaching would be formal, and some would be doing an activity and making it really comfortable for the women, so right away your volunteers fit with that (Connie, personal communication, April, 24, 2012).

Given that the student participants here only worked with the group for one three-hour session, I felt that Connie's group did not receive the ESL support they were looking for. For this reason, I decided to complete my own community-based placement by volunteering as an ESL instructor for the group. I also decided, based on the data I had collected and was in the process of analyzing, that I would try to achieve a more sustained partnership by participating as often as I could. I became a part-time volunteer ESL instructor for the group for the four months after the project was completed.

This experience allowed me to participate in the community in a way I would not have otherwise. By building a relationship with Connie and the women in her group, I deepened my involvement in the community. Initially, I sought out Connie and her support group as a potential site of learning for my students, but ultimately it became my own site for learning and experience. It led to a volunteer position that I deeply appreciated, and to friendships

with new immigrant women that continue to deepen my understanding of ESL teaching and learning.

Furthermore, by becoming involved in and committed to this group and continuing to grow my relationship with it, I have been able to build on what the students in my class can offer during subsequent sections of the course in which I have been the instructor. For example, in a subsequent course, two groups of students volunteered to partner with the immigrant women's support group, each group filling different needs that were identified through a more collaborative conversation between Connie, the immigrant women, the students, and me. Furthermore, Connie also was awarded a grant to offer a youth program, and students in a subsequent section of the course partnered with that group as well. The growth of this partnership and the results of facilitating meaningful opportunities between students in the course and members of Connie's support group reinforces for me the importance of not only building community partnerships but fostering and maintaining them.

Fostering relationships with community partners was valuable for me as an instructor because it provided a contextualized, community-based perspective on my own area of expertise. The conversations I have had throughout the last two years with Connie and the women in the group have continued to inform my understanding of the field of ESL teaching and learning from a very local perspective. I believe this makes me more knowledgeable, empathetic and credible as a teacher educator.

The relationship also led to opportunities to volunteer and share my skills with a support group that exists on hard-fought funding that varies year to year. For Connie and the group, they continue to connect with emerging teachers through my course and continue

to find effective and meaningful ways to incorporate preservice teachers into their planning. For example, during a subsequent section of the course one group of students spent a day with the immigrant support group teaching them to ice skate. They booked a rink, baked shortbread cookies, brought hot chocolate and video-taped the entire experience (with Connie and the participants' consent) for Connie and members of the group. Connie has suggested using the movie (that was edited with music, transitions, and quotes from both students and participants) for funding applications. Afterwards, the group reconvened at the group's regular meeting place and shared in the cookies and hot chocolate and discussed a variety of issues related to education.

This entire example illustrates my experiences of being part of a growing and deepening partnership that continues to engage my students, Connie and the women in her group, and me. As the following section illustrates, however, not all community-based experiences were quite as positive, although they were nonetheless rich and informative to both students and me.

Challenging Assumptions or Creating New Ones?

One of the questions that framed my initial interest in this research project was:

> In what ways can a community-based learning experience potentially disrupt preservice teachers' assumptions of ESL learners and inform their emerging understandings of ESL pedagogy?

I believed that a partnership in learning between students and the community would facilitate the students' challenge of previously held misunderstandings. Furthermore, I believed that these partnerships would result in new, positive understandings about ESL learners, and

challenge the deficit understandings that many educators have in regards to ESL learners (Cummins, 2001; Lee & Anderson, 2009). In seeking to do this, however, I was making my own assumption that preservice teachers would have expectations about ESL learners and that some of their assumptions would be problematic. Perhaps this assumption was based on my knowledge of the predominantly white, middle-class composition of teacher education program, and the gap that must create between teachers and ESL learners. What I found throughout this process, and what the following section discusses, was that many preservice teachers in this study demonstrated little previous experience with ESL learners, and knew little about them.

For example, in her reflections on an in-class activity designed to raise awareness of immigrants and refugees, one student noted:

> In class today I was a little embarrassed because I did not know the definition of the terms immigrant and refugee, I had an idea about the understanding of the terms, however, my understanding was a little unclear. I asked a classmate to clarify what they meant, and was surprised when someone else in the class overheard and said that they too were unsure of the correct definition (Lindsey, personal communication, January, 2012).

From comments like these, I realized that the community-based experience might not necessarily challenge previously held assumptions about ESL learners as much as it might give preservice teachers some much needed experience working with ESL students, youth, families, and organizations. This partnership experience might not necessarily challenge previous understandings, especially if there were no previous understandings to challenge, but would hopefully help students create real and informed understandings of ESL learners, their families,

and their communities. At the very least, they would now know what the definition of an immigrant or refugee was.

Indeed, the data analysis from this study illustrates that many of the preservice teachers who participated in this project forged new, compassionate understandings, making them more aware of ESL learners, their families, their cultures, and the resources in the community that attempt to assist newcomers to the country. These understandings include: 1) a greater awareness of the existence of racism toward newcomers; 2) a better awareness of community-based organizations and experts who can help newcomers adjust to life in Canada, and also can assist Canadian educators to help these families in the school system; 3) a better understanding of parental expectations of the Canadian public school system; and 4) a sharpened awareness of how to apply concepts from course discussions and readings to real world experiences.

What I did not expect, however, was that the data would also highlight how some student participants were exposed to, and adopted, potentially damaging ideas about newcomers after their community-based experiences. These potentially damaging assumptions raise concerns about the attitudes of some practitioners in our community, and the implications on courses and instructors that facilitate sending preservice teachers into partnerships with the community.

Louise and Paige

For their community-based placement, Louise and Paige partnered with a local school that some international students were attending. They met with the school administrators,

conducted interviews, and observed teachers in the international program for an entire day. In their reflection of this experience, the students wrote:

> Many of the girls have chosen to be at the school, but there are other girls who are there because their families no longer wanted them in their country. In Asia, academics and academic success is very important. [The School] advised us that if these girls were not excelling in their own country, it is sometimes easier for the families to send the girls away so they don't have to deal with the consequences of the success or lack of success of these girls. In some situations these girls may even have a learning disability. Since a learning disability is not seen as 'prestigious' or even acceptable in Asia, these girls are sent away so that parents can say that their child is doing well and is studying abroad (Louise and Paige, personal communication, April, 2012).

In this case, Louise and Paige are engaging with community-based experts—the administrators of a school with a high international population and a well-developed ESL curriculum. These administrators are practitioners in the field of ESL teaching and learning; we therefore assume that they are trustworthy and that our interests and goals as ESL educators will align. What we find here, however, is their articulation that Asian students are being sent away because they have learning disabilities. This potentially damaging perception appears to be adopted, to a certain degree, by Louise and Paige:

> …We found this terribly upsetting and we wonder how much trust to put in it, as we did hear it second hand but from someone who does have a lot of knowledge in the English Language program. We don't want to make any assumption as to the reason why some Asian families may send their child to Canada. There may be some truth in this comment made by [the school] but we wonder how often this happens. We also understand that in China, at one time, there was a one child rule, and if there was a girl, it could have been upsetting for the family. Or so the assumption goes. Boys were seen to be more useful in their society. This observation was more of a concern to us than it had to do with our ESL pedagogy but would inform our ESL teaching if we had an Asian student, female in particular, to watch for potential learning challenges. The concern here would be that the child is then learning a new language and has been put into a new environment where the language acquisition in the second language is taking the

> focus away from a bigger concern like a learning disability (Louise and Paige, personal communication, April, 2012).

Here the student participants appear to critically challenge the idea that Asian students are sent away from their home countries and that many of them have learning disabilities. They wonder how much trust to put into this idea, but also acknowledge that the source of this information "…does have a lot of knowledge." They further admit that there may be truth in this idea, but they are not quite sure if they should believe it. However, they then note that boys are seen as more prestigious than girls in Chinese society, based on the one-child policy. This idea seems to be included as a possible argument for why Chinese girl students are enrolling in private schools in English-speaking countries. The students conclude that all of this information would inform their pedagogy by having a heightened awareness of teaching Asian students, "females in particular" and their potential for having learning disabilities. Clearly, this stereotypical thinking is troubling.

Furthermore, Louise also articulated the following ideas in the post-course questionnaire:

> Further to this are cultural barriers or background knowledge that many ESL students do not have access to. We found it fascinating to hear that these students did not know anything about Christianity…[we] have now learned that there may be very little provided for you and that you are responsible for your own resources. This placement also opened my eyes to understanding the cultural implications of having a student from a different culture. For example, since there was a large Asian population at [the school], one of the teacher's had a quiz or test every day or every other day, due to the importance of testing in Asian culture (Louise, personal communication, May, 2012).

In this example, Louise observes her "fascination" with learning that the students at the school did not know anything about Christianity. Perhaps for Louise, this fascination is

disrupting an assumption that all students, regardless of cultural background and language ability, would know something about Christianity. Additionally, Louise hints at the creation of an emerging assumption, the influence of "Asian culture" on teaching methods and evaluation.

Pam, Erin and Taylor

Another example of how significant, yet somewhat negative assumptions appeared to be created from the experience comes from Pam, Erin, and Taylor. Pam, Erin, and Taylor were a group of three students who partnered with Linda, an ESL practitioner in a local school. They shadowed Linda's ESL pull-out classes, as well as worked with ESL students one-on-one. Upon reflecting on this experience, one student from the group wrote:

> Raymond is a younger student that Linda works with. He is an outspoken, loud, student who struggles in social situations. One of the stories that Linda shared with us about Raymond included an incident where he hurt another child with scissors. Linda also mentioned that Raymond would drop his materials and expect the teacher to pick them up for him. He is one of the more challenging students that Linda works with, because he is in need of constant attention. We were unsure if Raymond's qualities were similar to that of most students who grow up in a Chinese household, however he is slowly adjusting to social cues here in Canada (Taylor, personal communication, April, 2012).

Here Taylor wonders if Raymond's behaviour is "… similar to that of most students who grew up in a Chinese household…" Taylor is essentially wondering if hurting children with scissors and expecting teachers to clean up after them are qualities "…similar to that of most students who grow up in a Chinese household…" I identify my own assumption here in acknowledging that articulations such as this are potentially damaging. Taylor is attempting to make the connection that Raymond's "challenging" behaviour is "similar to that of most students who grow up in a Chinese household." This connection is troubling to me, and I am beginning to see

just how important it is to devote time to helping students like Taylor to reflect on these assumptions and hopefully begin to challenge them.

In the above examples, the community-based placement was carried out in a school-based environment—a place in which student participants engaged with actual ESL learners and actual ESL teachers. In this case, the place-based learning experience appears to challenge previously held assumptions—that ESL students would know something about Christianity. However, Louise also appears to be forging new potentially damaging assumptions involving using particular learning strategies and evaluation methods (i.e., quizzes) because of the "importance of testing in Asian culture." At the very least, the reflection on the experience provides student participants with a place to articulate understandings, new or old, that can, as this example shows, provide instructors with insight into the subtle yet potentially troubling ways that preservice teachers conceptualize students, their cultural backgrounds and their behaviours.

I Know that Racism is a Problem, but…

Although there was evidence of the emergence of potentially damaging assumptions by engaging with off-campus partners, also emerging from this data analysis were various examples of how new knowledge was formed and how assumptions were challenged through participation in community-based experiences. Community-based courses offer opportunities for preservice teachers to generate new knowledge about and appreciation of diverse cultures and communities and support deep examination of their own beliefs and assumptions (Onore & Gildon, 2010). Given the concerns that preservice teachers in North America are comprised

mostly of white, middle class students (Cochrane-Smith, Davies, Fries, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), opportunities to connect with members of the community are one way for teacher education programs to acknowledge the gaps that exist between the lived experience of students and teachers, and find the means within the curriculum to address these gaps. One example that illustrates this point clearly is from Jaime's experience.

For his community-based project, Jaime worked with a youth group that was preparing to interview other immigrant youth throughout the city concerning their experiences adjusting to life in Canada. This youth group was collecting data themselves, and then would use this data to create materials to distribute to local schools and local youth to help newcomers transition more easily, especially into school environments. Jaime worked with the youth group during their planning phase, when they were facilitating small pilot discussion groups with immigrant youth and discussing potential questions. During this experience, Jaime heard stories and experiences from a number of immigrant youth, and one story in particular was strongly represented in his reflection on the experience. Jaime writes:

> The immigrant youth were asked to recognise the challenges that they faced when they moved to Victoria. One challenge was overcoming intolerance, value judgements, racism, and being a visible minority […] Another challenge was trying to bridge the gap between school and home. At home there were old traditions and sometimes languages, while at school there were new traditions, language, activities, pastimes, slang and idioms. The student reiterated the challenges of getting along with other students, making new friends, and maintaining relationships with non-immigrants who had different histories. Many of these challenges were especially important at school. The challenges that these immigrant youth brought up are important to recognise as a teacher. I know that racism is a problem, but for some reason I thought that it was becoming less of an issue. I was disappointed to hear that immigrant youth still feel that they are singled out because of what they look like, how they speak, or where they are from (Jaime, personal communication, April, 2012).

Jaime acknowledges that although he knew racism was a problem, he thought that it was becoming less of an issue. Indeed, during his oral presentation to the class he admitted that he "didn't think racism was really a problem anymore." Although it is unclear if Jaime analyzed his assumptions deeply, he is at the very least acknowledging that he had assumed that racism was not a major issue anymore. Obviously, we hope that Jaime might have been taught, before or after starting a teacher education program, that racism is still prevalent and affects many individuals.

What is important here, however, is the organic nature of how this information was brought to Jaime's attention. He was not sitting in a classroom or a lecture hall, having an instructor, who incidentally could be white and middle class (like me), espousing the ills of racism. With this community-based experience, Jaime's understanding of racism, or lack thereof, is challenged boldly in a place-based experience where he is surrounded by immigrant youth, where he is the minority, and where he is in a situation of listening acutely to the experiences of youth—youth that represent many of the students he will one day teach. The authenticity and organic nature of this knowledge—that racism is a challenge for immigrant youth—is clearly transforming Jaime's understandings in a meaningful and situated way. Furthermore, Jaime did not go to this placement to interact with immigrant youth with racism and its challenges on his mind. Why would he, when he had assumed racism was not really an issue anymore? Instead, racism is what emerged from the narrative account of one particular youth. As Jaime admits, learning that racism was still a problem was a "disappointment." This kind of surprise challenged Jaime to acknowledge that he had not really thought racism was an

issue, and in acknowledging his naiveté, Jaime opens himself up to new knowledge that hopefully will inform his pedagogy and himself as an emerging teacher of immigrant youth.

Another advantage of opportunities for preservice teachers to connect with communities is that it provides them with frameworks for developing their own pedagogy (Onore & Gildon, 2010). For Jaime the effects of this experience on his pedagogy are articulated later in his assignment:

> [The issue of racism] made me realize the importance of education. The reason that most racism happens is that people do not understand other cultures or do not understand that their jokes are hurting someone. In order to make immigrant youth feel safe and welcome, it is essential that the class learns more about the histories of their classmates [….] In order to help my students overcome the gap between school and home, I will need to be patient and let the student join into activities as they feel comfortable and also to value their home traditions, language, and customs. In order to help the students fit in at school, I might also need to teach students slang, idioms, and nursery rhymes…I need to make sure that the classroom is inclusive and students know how to welcome other students into groups or games (Jaime, personal communication, April, 2012).

This reflection illustrates how Jaime is considering how this new knowledge—that racism affects immigrant youth—is affecting his understanding of teaching. Of course, it is difficult to see at this point how this experience will affect Jaime's teaching; only after Jaime has begun teaching, either in a practicum experience or as a classroom teacher, could this experience and its effect on his teaching be assessed. Yet Jaime is considering here how this new knowledge informs his understandings of what he might potentially do as a future teacher, such as create an "inclusive classroom." In this way, Jaime's level of empathy and understanding is increased, especially in regards to the challenges youth face, including racism, lack of tolerance, and value judgements. Heightening his awareness of these issues through

physical and dialogical interaction with immigrant youth themselves will most likely affect how he interacts with students, what he observes in the classroom, and how he chooses to address these issues with his students. Although he does not explain how he might create an inclusive classroom, Jaime recognizes the need "to make sure that the classroom is inclusive and students know how to welcome other students into groups or games" (Jaime, personal communication, April, 2012).

Perhaps it is possible to imagine that Jaime could have still discovered that racism is a problem and affects our students with only a lecture on racism, yet the situated and embodied nature of this exchange, and the knowledge that emerges from it, has the potential to remain a stronger informer for Jaime than a lecture on racism by quite possibly another white, middle class teacher educator (like me). Jaime discovered this information himself, through his conversations and interactions with an immigrant youth, and applied it to his teaching values, and this seems to me to be a more powerful presentation of knowledge than mere classroom-based learning. For this reason, however, more longitudinal studies that evaluate how place-based experiences like this affect teachers in their professional lives will need to be completed.

You Can't Build a Relationship by Dropping In

For preservice teachers, or any student group, to work meaningfully with community members, especially with newcomers with limited language proficiency and in the midst of adapting to a new culture, relationship building and the trust that emerges from it is key. Indeed, quality learning relationships may be of particular importance for those who are "on the margins" in one way or another (Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000). Relationship building was

integral to this project and an impetus for me in incorporating community-based learning into the course. However, I may have been a bit simplistic about what really constitutes relationship building. Is having a coffee and talking about racism relationship building? Having students ride their bike downtown to participate in a youth group is still dynamic and the interaction that results clearly can shape their understandings and their pedagogy, but as the findings here show, in order to encourage students to build meaningful and trusting relationships with the community, deeper interaction is necessary.

Dropping in on the community

In post-project interviews and questionnaires, I asked both community participants and students to comment on their level of participation as well as what they thought would be the ideal level of participation in a course-based project such as this. Many of the community partners agreed that they liked the less formal nature of this project compared to similar experiential learning like practicums, internships and co-op terms, citing the drawbacks of time commitments and administrative responsibilities as deterrents to more formal partnerships. Nonetheless the same participants agreed that more frequent participation on the part of the preservice teachers would be beneficial. For example, Emily, the youth group facilitator who worked with the journalism-based youth group, thought that student participants need to be more involved:

> I think it's okay, but I really don't think it has very much of an impact. I mean I would be surprised if from a one-off thing,….I think if it was a question of doing it or not doing it at all it's great to do it because it does give the idea that there are things out there in the community that are education related that you work with different sections of the community that you wouldn't necessary interact with otherwise…but I really think like if you could have a course where a mandatory part of the course was volunteering for a term with a homework club with a

> youth night…and the problem is that the organizations want you to volunteer for a year…and like a project like mine coming in for a term you wouldn't see the end of it…but you can't build a relationship by dropping in (Emily, personal communication, April 20, 2012).

Similarly, Connie, the facilitator of the immigrant women's support group, discussed the importance of trust and opening up with the women she works with:

> And the relationship building is hard in one time…they won't share though without this, a lot of them from other cultures…I mean this is just what I've learned is that we may be really open and extraverted with certain questions…but some of the cultures they come from…talking about your life is dangerous, right, so…I think that even if they came…once a month for four months, or if they wanted to squish it in and come every Friday I think they would get to know some of the women more individually…umm…there's quite a few I think some stereotypes were smashed once I started this group once you get to know them…it would take more than once…so you know depending on their schooling if it would work (Connie, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

Finally, Margaret, the youth group facilitator at CAC, discussed how more participation would enable her to give more opportunities to student participants. Her comments illustrate the importance of knowledge sharing between both students and, in this case, immigrant youth:

> No, I think more participation would definitely be more beneficial for both because eventually I'd like to see the students facilitate, and offer that opportunity to participate because they really were very respectful of it being a youth space; they really took a step back and they were like—we're just here to kind of observe more than participate—which was great but to feel comfortable because it was their first time and, developing group rapport, I would like the students to participate a little more….Maybe if they did a mini-presentation themselves about why they're interested in teaching or you know something to give something of themselves because they're in an environment where people are giving a lot of themselves, so there's that balance and knowledge exchange—something so that they're giving something (Margaret, April 19, 2012).

What these examples illustrate is the desire of the community-based participants to have more student engagement. They would like them to "give something of themselves," and

spend more time building trust and relationships in order for both students and community members to share more meaningfully. Building relationships and trust will not be achieved by just "dropping in"; ideally students need to linger, connect, and interact in ways that will be beneficial to both sides.

The students drop in

One of the biggest challenges of implementing the community-based project was finding a balance between what I could expect from both students and community partners in terms of participation. Community-based programs do not usually run in synchrony with a university's four month semester. Programs start and end at different times, and finding a time to incorporate students into those programs can be problematic for community partners. Furthermore, I did not want to be demanding of community-based participants. They are practitioners with responsibilities and they would not be paid with money or time by participating in these community-based projects. This idea is articulated well by Margaret, the facilitator of one of the youth groups, when she was asked about her desire to participate in the future if the project was more involved:

> …We'd have to kind of formalize some sort of…so that you know there were parameters… because you know that I'm one youth worker…and so it's definitely challenging at times to accept requests to partner because I only have so much capacity and my time really needs to go to my program and the youth…(Margaret, April 19, 2012).

It was also important to be aware that the student participants were undergraduates enrolled in other courses with other demands, and many of them had part-time jobs, making scheduling community placements challenging. Nonetheless, when asked about what they thought would be ideal in terms of participating in community-based projects, most students

who responded to the questionnaire cited a desire to participate more often or in more than one community-based project. When asked to comment on what they thought was the ideal amount of participation in a project like this, most students who answered the post-course questionnaire responded that they would like to participate more. For example, Louise, a student participant who partnered with a local school:

> I think in order to really understand what an organization does and how it operates, I feel that you need to spend a substantial amount of time with the organization, the people who run it and its participants. I feel that you must first observe the operation and then participate. By only going on the community-based placement once…you are not seeing the entire picture of what happens and how the organization helps the community (Louise, personal communication, May, 2012).

Louise's comments echo many other students' responses, and echo some of the previously discussed comments from community-based participants concerning time and commitment to projects. Louise suggests that students need a "substantial" amount of time in order to really understand an organization and its participants. Like many students, Louise comments that only participating one time does not provide students with a clear picture of what an organization does or how it helps members of the community. These ideas are reinforced by Lindsey's comments, which go further into the connection between time participating and relationship-building:

> I think the CBL was a good way to wet our toes and be introduced to CBL, however, it would have been nice to go more often and build a better understanding and better relationship with the people we met, however, that would involve a lot of time – which isn't always available (Lindsey, personal communication, May, 2012).

Lindsey partnered with the immigrant women's group and her comments suggest that building a better relationship with community partners is important. However, Lindsey also identifies

that time is an issue in availability to participate. This issue of time continues to emerge from reflections and comments related to making the community-based experience deeper and better and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Perhaps assuming that time was not an issue, other students indicated their interest in doing more than one community-based placement. Emma, a student who partnered with the homework club at CISC responded:

> Personally, I would have loved to have more of the course working with and learning about these community based placements. Having the ability to go to more than one placement would have been a wonderful learning experience as they all sounded to be extremely useful experiences (Emma, personal communication, May, 2012).

Another student, Janet, who partnered with an ESL specialist, makes a similar response by suggesting that students go to placements every month in order to see ESL teaching in a variety of ways:

> The more participation in the community, the better. Maybe it could have been a monthly occurrence so students can see teaching ESL in the community in a variety of different ways (Janet, personal communication, May, 2012).

Building on Janet's suggestion, but also commenting on issues of time, Lucy who partnered with the CAC homework club suggests:

> I think it would be beneficial to have students go to at least two different placements, and perhaps reflect/do the presentation on one of their choice. I would definitely have been up for going more than once. That being said I have a pretty flexible schedule – I know that others have trouble finding time outside of school and work. If it could be spread over the term however, I think it would definitely be manageable (and beneficial) for students to participate in community based placements at least twice (Lucy, personal communication, May, 2012).

Although students like Lucy suggest going to more than one community-based site, it would be quite difficult to facilitate this. There are only so many partners involved in the project, and asking them to make time for two, three, or four different groups of students to "drop in," is not only time-consuming, but perhaps detrimental to the process of deeper more sustained partnerships. Having students choose one site, and having them revisit it two, three or four times appears to be the most effective structure given feedback from community members, students, and the instructor. In subsequent sections of the course, I have allowed students to complete two community-based experiences only if both the student and the community organization or member agrees.

It is also important to note, however, that there were some students who recognized that although they would like to participate more in community-based activities, there were challenges to increased participation:

> While in theory I would have loved to participate in a lot more community based learning, our busy schedules make this difficult. If it were possible to incorporate this into the already scheduled class time that would be much more realistic. The amount of time that I spent on this was not too overwhelming, but enough time to develop a deeper understanding of the topic area. It was a difficult choice choosing which community based project to do, and if it weren't for all of the other courses and work that I have, I would have loved to participate even more (Kim, personal communication, May, 2012).

Kim's point about incorporating community-based activity into existing class time is one that I am considering[5]. Instead of having community-based activities structured as an add-on to traditional approaches, I am now seeing that they should be incorporated into the

[5] As a sessional instructor conducting research on my course, I was obligated to submit my syllabus to the department chair prior to commencing the course. At this time I was instructed that I could not replace existing class time with community-based learning, and that any off-campus learning had to be optional and be in addition to class hours, not in lieu of them.

course more substantially, replacing other more traditional approaches. I discuss the value of this idea more deeply in the following chapter.

Overall, most community members and preservice teachers expressed interest in improving the project by increased and more sustained participation. Nonetheless, some students pointed out the challenges to increased participation given scheduling and time constraints. As the instructor I see the advantages to both the community's and the students' more in-depth participation, especially in terms of building relationships and trust that will result in even more sharing, collaboration, and insight into the lives of ESL learners and their communities. In order to structure courses with more opportunity for increased participation, departments and faculties may have to adjust schedules to build in flexibility. This recommendation will be explored further in the analysis section.

Teaching? English? As a Second language?

As one may expect, for the students who worked with ESL specialists in school-based placements, language and teaching themes were strongly highlighted in their data. In their reflections on these school-based experiences, students who worked with ESL specialists drew a number of connections between course-based readings on methods of instruction and the methods of instruction that they actually witnessed. Students whose placements were not in school-based environments also made concrete connections between their experiences in the community and the more theoretical work addressed within course readings and discussions; however, these connections were largely more related to issues of culture, communication, and resources in the community. This is not to say that language and language teaching was not

alluded to by students engaging outside of schools; rather it was just more prominent in the three school-based reflections. For example, in their discussion of what they noticed in a local school's ESL adjunct support class, Louise and Paige commented:

> It is the concepts in the Echevarria article that were exhibited the most in the classes we observed. In the Social Studies class we observed, the teacher had modified the text from the…textbook in order for the ESL students to perform better and understand the concepts in a more simplistic way. The teacher also needed to provide background knowledge on Christianity. Social Studies was integrated with English vocabulary development through the use of providing definitions for words that students would need to understand the text, these words were written on the opposite side of the text page and students were given definitions that were more simplistic, easier to understand. Creating pairs and small groups was prevalent in all the classes we observed and this helped the students have input and be able to hear from others. All the classes we observed were ESL classes, with no English speaking learners, which allowed ESL learners to pair up or be in groups together. As tests are seen as the norm in Asian society, the Social Studies teachers gave tests on almost a daily basis or every other day to keep standards similar to what would be found in the Asian curriculum (Louise and Paige, personal communication, April, 2012).

Similar comments relating to specific teaching methods were provided by other students engaging in school-based environments. Interestingly, in the following example, Pam, Erin and Taylor, who worked with a school-based ESL specialist, reflect critically on what they observed and make suggestions on what they would do differently by citing concepts directly from course readings and discussions:

> [Her] main teaching tool was to give the students worksheets. When we saw her class, the younger ESL students were completing a worksheet that involved them identifying long and short vowel sounds […]We did not feel this was beneficial because it is not practical or relevant to their lives. Instead of using this worksheet we would use the concepts from communicative language teaching method and have students practice asking questions through role-play. Overall, we felt that if these worksheets were open-ended they could have been used to promote creativity. However, they didn't incorporate very much critical thinking, there were too many of them, and they didn't help they students internalize

> their learning. Therefore, we feel there are more beneficial ways to teach ESL (Pam, Erin, and Taylor, personal communication, April, 2012).

In this case, we see students applying what they learned during their university class time. In their observations they note the absence of communicative language teaching and methods of role-play that they studied in class, and they critically suggest that these ideas are better than what they were observing in the school-based ESL classroom. In the following chapter I discuss the implications of these findings more deeply, drawing attention to the nature of critical reflection, collaboration and the ethical issues of engaging in community-based projects such as this.

Language in non-school based environments

Students who participated in non-school based environments also commented on language issues. For example, Lucy completed her placement at a homework club run by CAC, a non-profit organization. She volunteered to tutor high school ESL students and in reflecting on the experience she draws parallels between her observations in the homework club and issues of language:

> Some of the students were fairly withdrawn and tended to isolate themselves from the rest of the group in a quiet corner, speaking only their native languages. Others were outgoing and eager to practice speaking their second language with each other. Many of these students use translating machines in class and in the community. I got the impression that at this point [the leader] and the tutors are simply hoping to build connections with the non-English speakers in order to make them feel more comfortable. As Echevarria and Graves state, "respecting and using students' native language is integral to responsive teaching" (pg. 123). In the future, they will assign these students English-speaking tutors, gradually increasing their Zones of Proximal Development. The Homework Club environment is a good example of the fact that "learners working in groups get far more practice in speaking and participating in conversations in group work than they ever could in a teacher-

> centered class" (Lightburn and Spada, 2002, pg. 169) (Lucy, personal communication, April, 2012).

In this reflective passage, Lucy is commenting on language and language teaching techniques even though she is not in a school-based environment. There are no "teachers" but a leader and some volunteer high school tutors. Nonetheless, Lucy is observing how first and second languages are being used to negotiate meaning for the youth in the homework club, and how the facilitators are using first languages to build connections and community. Furthermore, Lucy connects these observations with material from two separate readings from the course. These connections further highlight what she is noticing about constructivist and social constructivist teaching and learning techniques. I cannot tell from this quote how she might use this knowledge that she is building as a future teacher of ESL learners, but it is important to note that elements of language teaching and learning were still present and noticed by students engaging in non-school based community experiences.

Shauna and Nora make similar observations related to language by drawing parallels between their experiences with the youth leadership group and course material:

> Throughout the session, we noticed that youth were allowed to communicate in their first language. We saw only the lower level[6] ESL learners using their first languages with each other. The lower level students would listen to a question in English, talk about it in their first language, and then answer the question in English. For the most part, everyone was conversing in English. This relates to a discussion we had in class about whether or not to allow ESL students to speak in their first language. We believe it will sometimes be necessary for ESL students to speak in their first language in the classroom – especially when they are in the beginning stages of their language development. The key will be finding a balance between speaking their first language and English (Nora and Shauna, personal communication, April, 2012).

[6] It is unclear what Shauna and Nora mean by "lower level." I imagine that within the youth group there were various levels of language learners, and Shauna and Nora conceptualized some as being weaker than others.

In these two examples, the students comment on the use of first languages. During our in-class discussions, the class had a somewhat heated debate on the information presented in a reading that encouraged instructors to make use of a student's first language whenever possible. During the classroom debate, the class appeared divided on how to proceed in incorporating first languages. Many students expressed their discomfort in allowing students to speak their first language in class. These students believed that ESL students need to learn English and classroom teachers need to promote English while teaching. Other students, however, recognized that there could be times when it would be appropriate and useful to have students speak their first language.

Nora and Shauna, and Lucy draw parallels between the in-class reading and the discussion that it inspired after observing first hand an example of a situation in which first languages were used by ESL learners. Not only does the community-based experience provide an example of language-based issues outside of the classroom, it once again promotes an experiential illustration of theory and practice coming together.

In her reflection, Lucy also raises issues related to language teaching and learning by discussing methods of evaluation. Issues related to evaluation were raised through dialogue that she had with one student, and which she records in her journal:

> Another student whom I spoke to told me about the anxiety she feels regarding written assignments in school. "It's so confusing," she said. "My teacher doesn't understand my ideas. I know what to say, but when I try to write it down I can't find the words and then I get a bad mark." She feels frustrated, because even in subjects other than Language Arts, the teachers assess students based on their ability to write down their ideas. Even though if given the opportunity she could demonstrate her understanding in other ways, she receives poor marks in school because "other kids who speak English as their first language can write

> sentences and sentences about one thing, but [she] only knows one way to say it so [her] papers are never long enough." When I asked her if she had tried to explain all this to her classroom teacher, she sighed and replied that "the teacher doesn't care." I hope that hearing this girl's story will help me to be more sensitive and aware of students' experiences in school and the challenges they are facing (Lucy, personal communication, April, 2012).

In the above excerpt, Lucy recounts a significant conversation she has with an ESL youth while volunteering in the homework club. The youth explains her frustrations around trying to write well, make her ideas clear and find the words to express herself effectively, or at least effectively enough to do well on written assignments. The youth clearly feels frustrated and Lucy appears moved by this narrative and asserts that she wants to be more empathetic to future students having heard this story. Informed by this non-school based environment, Lucy continues her reflection, tying it all together, and considers a variety of issues related to language learning and language teaching:

> According to Lightbown and Spada (2002), "The principal way that teachers can influence learners' motivation is by making the classroom a supportive environment" (pg. 163). This might include using different forms of assessment, especially for classes in which the learned content has nothing to do with writing as a subject, simplifying objectives, or adapting the text to make "difficult to read sections of text comprehensible" (Echevarria and Graves, pg. 131). This can be done by "offering an alternative to written assignments," or "breaking down complex assignments into simpler, more meaningful parts" (pg. 140)...I hope to become a more empathetic teacher by knowing that just because students' ideas are organized differently than the English norm, that doesn't necessarily mean they are wrong (Lucy, personal communication, April, 2012).

Lucy is considering deeply issues of evaluation and exploring the intersections between her experiences with the student at homework club, the readings on alternative evaluation, and her emerging identity as a teacher. Furthermore, although Lucy does not identify them as the principles of universal design for learning (UDL), she is clearly considering the concept of

flexible learning for different learners, and the value in acknowledging the learning needs of every student. Indeed, Lucy may have considered UDL previously or might be introduced to it in another course, but her statements denote a personal connection to the concept of UDL, informed by participating in and reflecting on a community-based experience with actual ESL learners.

Another example of how the students' awareness to issues of language was raised through this experience comes from the group who engaged with the immigrant women's support group. Faith, Kate and Lindsey prepared a cooking lesson for these women, and afterwards engaged in a discussion with them on a number of topics including their perspectives on education in Canada. In their reflection, the students commented:

> As we ate our freshly prepared brunch with the women there was a lot of discussion. We quickly learned that we needed to be very conscious of the speed at which we were speaking; we had to speak slowly, and be short and specific. We automatically began using hand gestures along with our speech[…] One of the challenges in the group was that the women who spoke at a higher level of English would try end up speaking for the women who did not speak as well. Connie would try and encourage the women to only speak in English and to speak for themselves as much as possible; her redirection skills were great to watch (Faith, Kate and Lindsey, personal communication, April, 2012).

In their reflection the students do not make direct reference to how this experience is informing them as teachers, but clearly they are reflecting on what it means to be a sympathetic interlocutor. They have chosen here to reflect on elements of language and how strategies like using gestures, redirecting, translating, and slowing down speech that help first language speakers interact with second language speakers.

As mentioned early, I did not conceive of this project to specifically target participant awareness of language and language teaching. I knew working with the community would raise awareness of a number of issues, and that language would fall under that umbrella, but I was vague with myself and with my students about how language and language teaching would be directly influenced by this project. However, issues of language acquisition, assessment in language teaching, and strategies for working with second language speakers did ultimately emerge from this project.

Conclusion

What these findings illustrate is that this community-based learning initiative resulted in a variety of perceived benefits to a variety of participants: community members, preservice teachers, ESL youth, parents of ESL learners, group facilitators, ESL specialists, and the instructor of the course. Emerging from a discussion of these benefits is a picture of collaborative engagement and coeducation where participants come together in alternative sites of learning like coffee shops and community centres to listen, to observe and to share. Through this process of listening and sharing, participants' understandings of ESL teaching and learning was changed. The findings also show that the community often felt validated by the university's initiative, and by being able to "give back," all of which calls into question the nature of reciprocity and what it means to engage in a balanced and equitable relationship. Furthermore, in determining whether or not damaging assumptions were challenged, I found that in some ways expertise in the community resulted in biased generalizations being articulated in student work. In the following analysis, I look at some of the more troubling

aspects arising from the findings, and suggest ways to improve further on designing and implementing community-based courses in teacher education programs.

Chapter 6: Analysis

In this course-based action research project, students, community members, ESL learners, their families, and the instructor came together in a variety of ways to learn about teaching ESL. These partnerships in learning all took place off campus and challenged participants to engage socially and dialogically beyond the classroom to create and co-create knowledge about ESL teaching and learning. Data from my study illustrates how these partnerships benefitted all participants; how these partnerships affected student understanding in a variety of ways; how most participants agreed that longer and more sustained projects would improve community-based experiences; and how action research into my own teaching led to critical reflection and insight that informed my own pedagogy, and hopefully the pedagogy of others**.** These findings address my original research questions:

- What does the process of designing and delivering a community-based teacher education course in ESL teaching methods look like?
- How do students, instructors, and community organizations experience participating in a community-based teacher education course?
- In what ways can a community-based learning experience potentially disrupt preservice teachers' assumptions of ESL learners and inform their emerging understandings of ESL pedagogy?
- How can the community participate as co-educators in teacher education programs?

In this chapter, I look more closely at the themes that have emerged from the findings and that illuminate the research questions. These themes include the importance of reciprocity and collaboration in community-based learning; the value of including schools in community-based experiences; the necessity of support structures that ensure community-based engagement

projects are well-designed and implemented. I suggest what implications these themes have on teacher education programs and teacher educators, and on the design and implementation of community-based courses.

Validation in the Community: Establishing Reciprocity and Collaboration

The discourse on community-based teaching and learning has been criticized for its focus on the value to students rather than its value to communities. Critics of university-driven community-based engagement projects point out the pitfall of universities using the community for their own benefit and for the benefit of their students, while neglecting the needs or interests of the community (Bortolin, 2011; Giles & Cruz, 2000; Howard, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Aware of this risk and knowing that as an agent of the university I was driving this project forward, I wanted to guard against using the community for the benefit of myself, my research, and the preservice teachers enrolled in my course. Instead, I wanted the community-based partners in the project to exist as co-educators with students and me.

Despite these intentions, I was nonetheless worried about how best to achieve such collaboration. The community partners in this project—the non-profit organizations, the parents, the settlement workers, the teachers—they had not come to me; instead I was seeking them out and encouraging their participation. I wanted to identify relevant community experts and seek their cooperation in educating future teachers of ESL learners. I wanted to meet with them, begin building a relationship, and encourage them to see if and how partnering with me and my students might also benefit them and their goals. I saw the partnership as a way to

build connections in the community that would be reciprocal; I wanted to collaborate with non-profit organizations, parents, teachers, immigrant youth, and whoever else might want to participate in order to shape the curriculum of my course together for the benefit of everyone. Indeed, I wanted to help my own students by making their learning more relevant, more meaningful and more contextualized. I wanted them to get more out of the course than a to-do list of how to design ESL lesson plans, and I believed that working and learning in a community context could encourage deeper learning related to what it means to teach ESL learners.

I also wanted to help my own pedagogy, and find innovative ways to teach my students and achieve my learning outcomes. I wanted to help the community by inviting them into my curriculum, and ask them to shape it with their needs, goals and perspectives. I wanted them to be part of the education process, and for them to influence how one class of emerging teachers would come to know and understand ESL learners.

My impetus for this project was to connect these two groups—the future teachers of ESL students and the communities and environments in which ESL students and their families engage. Identifying the value of the community's expertise was not so that students could get an 'A' in the course, but so that they could be more informed teachers—more empathetic, more understanding, and more aware of the needs of ESL learners, as well as the social-linguistic and cultural resources they bring with them to the classroom. I believed that through this project, preservice teachers would also become more aware of resources in the community like settlement workers, youth groups, and homework clubs, and that knowing these groups

might inform their teaching and inspire them to collaborate with these community members in the future.

With issues of reciprocity on my mind, I approached community partners to introduce the project and to encourage them to contribute their ideas, enabling them to shape the project according to their needs and interests. Although the community partners I collaborated with during this project did not necessarily come to me, they all appeared enthusiastic in participating and many mentioned that by working with preservice teachers they were fulfilling their own mandate of educating others about issues faced by newcomers.

In approaching potential community partners, I was influenced by Shalowitz et al.'s (2009) explanation of the benefits of an academic-community partnership, namely its ability to foster trust-building between universities and communities. To build this trust, Shalowitz et al. suggest that academic and community partners work together to establish guiding principles and group norms to apply to group meetings and decision-making processes. Following this suggestion, I intended to work initially with the community organizations, eliciting their input on how meetings should be structured and how decision-making would best be achieved. What I found most often during these initial meetings, however, was a deferral to me for guidance. This deferral was illustrated through my interactions with Mona and Margaret.

As much as I wanted to let my participants shape the project in alignment with their own needs and interests, I ultimately had to suggest to most participants examples of how the students might be utilized in their placements to most participants. Shaping the project in this way seemed antithetical to the discourse on reciprocity in community-university partnerships,

yet if the project was to go forward, it was clear that I was expected to assist partners in designing it. However, it is worth noting that Mona, for example, was extremely positive and enthusiastic about participating because of her previous experiences working with teachers who she thought lacked cross-cultural training and cross-cultural communication skills. She clearly wanted to be part of an attempt to help connect preservice teachers with members of the local ESL community in order to work toward helping the very students and families whom she serves through her position as a settlement worker. Mona was not necessarily shaping the project but her needs and interests were aligned with mine; we both wanted to help build understanding between preservice teachers and ESL communities. According to Marshall (2009) ESL is not only a linguistic state but it is also an institutional identity that some educators associate with non-acceptance and deficit. Indeed, this deficit understanding is prevalent in educational settings like primary schools, and demonstrates a troubling lack of recognition of sociolinguistic diversity and multiplicity in ESL learners (Marshall, 2009).

Other scholars echo Marshall's claims, insisting that educators and schools are failing to acknowledge the richness of language and culture that exists for these learners outside of school (Garcıa, Skutnabb-Kangas & Torres-Guzman; 2006). Troublingly, this deficit identity can sometimes be perpetuated by educators, as indicated in the previous chapter when three school-based placements resulted in the articulation of stereotypical and negative assumptions about ESL learners. For those committed to educating future teachers, these findings indicate the need to continue to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to acknowledge and critically reflect on potential deficit assumptions before they enter the school system, and to look beyond traditional classroom-based approaches to learning. By incorporating community

members as co-educators in teacher education programs, instructors like myself are able to include more perspectives in a course. As well, instructors are able to encourage a deeper, more situated way of learning that connects preservice teachers with members of the ESL community whose knowledge and stories can impact preservice teachers in powerful and transformative ways, both in and out of school.

In undertaking this study, I suggested that the practice of disrupting this deficit understanding can be facilitated by designing and implementing community-based courses in teacher education programs. Having completed the course and analysed the data, my belief is that providing meaningful community-based opportunities, both in and out of schools, is not only valuable but necessary to the growth and development of preservice teachers, as well as to those who design their curriculum and teach their courses.

Power Differentials

When universities seek to engage community members in learning partnerships, they can risk reasserting power differentials between universities and communities (Kothari, 2001). Kothari argues that when traditionally privileged and empowered institutions like universities elicit the participation of community organizations and by extension the marginalized groups they serve, they often also seek to further their own scholarly agendas through the acquisition of knowledge. As Hall (2005) points out, academic knowledge is a commodity that affords economic privilege through the process of promotion, research grants, and publications. Furthermore, universities that seek the participation of community-based organizations are in effect "calling the shots," an act that reasserts a position of authority over less empowered groups. How then do universities ensure that the ways in which they "include" the community

do not continue to maintain a status quo power imbalance between university and community, between second language teacher and second language learner? One suggestion arising from the data involves the importance of collaboration and reciprocity as a key principle to the design of community-based courses.

Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen and Guzman's (2003) framework for community-based participatory research recognizes the potential for unequal power distribution between partners, and discusses the necessity for collaborative, equitable partnerships during all phases of the project to enable both the university and the community to participate and share influence in the project. It therefore becomes important for course designers and facilitators to recognize that community organizations working with socially and economically marginalized groups have not traditionally had the power or the opportunity to voice their needs, goals, or priorities, especially in regards to university-designed courses.

For this reason, instructors designing courses need to acknowledge the inequalities between themselves and the community, and find ways to share information, decision-making power, resources and support in the most equitable way (Israel et al., 2003). By acknowledging and reflecting upon their situated privilege, and attempting to create and maintain equitable partnerships, course designers work toward reducing potential power inequalities and developing trusting and mutually rewarding experiences for all participants.

Furthermore, when course designers invite community organizations and community members into dialogues and into the course design process, they are establishing a collaborative co-educator relationship that acknowledges the needs and interests of the

community, as well as giving the community a voice and a stake in the course project. Power dynamics can then begin to shift toward a more reciprocal and co-operative nature, rather than a top-down, university-driven power dynamic.

With the above ideas on collaboration in mind, I wanted to work toward this kind of collaborative partnership in my own course design. It was my intention in this project to invite the community partners into the design of the course and into the design of each particular group-based project. What I encountered most often, however, was community partners deferring to me as "the expert," and seeking my assistance in shaping the project. Indeed, a number of community-based partners looked to me for direction and wanted me to design the project, thus challenging my preconceptions of how an equitable partnership was supposed to unfold. Furthermore, some partners even expressed a sense of validation by being approached by the university, and this validation was seen by them as a benefit to participating in the project. As a result, my efforts to encourage reciprocity and share the ownership of designing this project seemed lost; instead, my initiative resulted in feelings of validation that made me uncomfortable and seemed to further highlight, within this context, the existence of power differentials between members of the university and members of the community.

When community partners expressed their opinion that a benefit to participating in this project was feeling happy that the university was taking an interest in them, I was experiencing a side-effect of a tradition of imbalance of power between the university and members of the community. Traditionally, university researchers hold an institutional power and status of expertise which can lead to them influencing the research agenda in terms of making demands

of community participants or limiting community partners' decision-making authority (Hall et. al., 2011). I was attempting to fight this imbalance. I knew all about the research on how universities can reify this power dynamic by initiating projects that address their own needs more so than the community's, and so I engaged with potential community partners in a way that I hoped would challenge this power dynamic.

Despite this knowledge and these efforts, I still found evidence of community members feeling validated by the university approaching them and inviting them into this course-based learning project. Is being validated by the university an acceptable advantage to this project, or should partnerships work toward eradicating this sense of validation? As uncomfortable as it makes me to admit this, I would argue that promoting a sense of validation is an acceptable advantage to engaging the community in terms of this project. Within this project, I cannot perhaps reverse the deep-seated tradition of the university being seen as what Mona, the SWIS worker, and Prins (2006) call the "expert." What I am doing, however, on a small scale, is attempting to shift that expert role and share it with others as we engage together.

As this project grows, my hope is that community participants will begin to see themselves as experts as well. Furthermore, as universities begin to move toward a more engaged model, where they are working with community partners in a variety of research, teaching and learning capacities, the community and others have the potential to perhaps reconceptualise community knowledge as expertise and community partners as experts. However, I feel that we are only at the beginning of this journey.

One way I envision this reconceptualization taking place is through more community engagement opportunities, especially in regards to teaching and learning, at institutes of higher education. As more community-based courses evolve, I believe that how students and faculty and the community conceptualize expertise, knowledge and learning spaces will change. Traditional ideas about how to learn and where to learn and who is an expert can be disrupted in dynamic and powerful ways, as seen in this study, through collaborating meaningfully with the people and places that lay beyond a campus. To encourage more community-based courses, however, institutions will need to identify this as a priority and provide support for those courses, those instructors, and those community members interested in collaborating in community-university learning initiatives.

In initiating this project, I believed I would be working toward a shift in privilege and understanding, and this shift would result in preservice teachers understanding the lived experience of ESL learners and their linguistic, cultural and social assets that are often ignored in school-based environments. Admittedly, it will take more than one community-based teacher education course, and one community experience to level out the legacy of power inequities existing between universities and communities, especially communities connected to society's more marginalized members like immigrants and ESL learners.

Perhaps from being on the margins for so long, ESL community members and the organizations that serve them experience a sense of appreciation and validation when one of those institutions takes an interest, acknowledges their expertise, and seeks to partner for the shared benefit of all members. Of course, instructors and course designers interested in and

committed to engaging with the community need to be aware of this differential and work toward lessening it. However, perhaps because power differentials exist between the university and the community, as well as the validation that is possible by seeking partnership with the community, universities more than ever need to continue to elicit the expertise and cooperation of communities, recognizing their strengths and expertise in order to fulfill this sense of validation while at the same time working toward lessening it.

It is worth noting that universities are indeed working toward being more community-engaged and applying principles of reciprocity when engaging in community-based partnerships. The University of Victoria's Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community-University Engagement (ISICUE), Vancouver Island University's Community-Based Research Institute, the University of Calgary's Centre for Community-Engaged Learning, and the University of Alberta's Faculty of Arts Community Service Learning Program are a few such examples within the western Canadian context. These centres and programs are committed to supporting partnerships between their university and the greater community. Initiatives such as these encourage an engaged approach to community-university partnerships that ensure that community-based principles such as reciprocity are being employed when partnerships are designed or sought.

Although centres such as these are committed to redistributing the power across institutional and community borders, they focus predominantly if not exclusively on research-based projects. How then are instructors supported when wanting to engage not in research, but in teaching and learning? At most universities, it is the teaching and learning centres that

support community-based teaching and learning projects and the instructors and community members interested in this approach. The level of expertise at such centres, as it relates to principles of community-based teaching and learning, varies from institution to institution. Institutions that are, however, using centralized support mechanisms to encourage meaningful engagement with the community, especially in regards to teaching and learning, will become models. For this reason, more research into how these support mechanisms, whether they are centres or individual positions, act as a bridge between community and university will be useful to institutions who opening up to community-based teaching and learning. Furthermore, the continuing organization of local, regional and national networks, journals, and conferences could be an effective step to sharing of best practices around how to support, investigate, and grow the field of community-based teaching and learning.

Collaboration

Another idea emerging from the data is the implication of collaboration between community participants and student participants in terms of post-project reflections. Charlene was a student participant who worked in a group of three students with Eileen, an elementary ESL specialist working predominantly in a pull-out environment. Charlene shadowed Eileen, worked one-on-one with ESL students, and afterwards sat down with Eileen to discuss a number of issues and concerns that Charlene had about teaching ESL. In her reflection, Charlene draws attention to her new understanding of a lack of collaboration between the ESL specialists and the classroom teachers.

> I figured that ESL teachers would be given a small group of students to work with and be told by the classroom teachers what their strengths and weaknesses are as well as what they wanted the ESL teacher to focus on. That said, I am sure

> that in many cases that the classroom teacher might share this information or that the classroom teacher and ESL specialists might work together to help the student and practice the skills that the ESL teacher uses in the classroom. However, I was shocked to see that this was not happening at [the school]. Eileen was basically given a list of ESL funded students and had to meet them all and put them in similar groups that would work well together. She had to find out where each of the students was at and not many of the teachers follow through to see where the students are at (Charlene, personal communication, May, 2012).

In the above excerpt, Charlene articulates her "shock" at the lack of collaboration between an ESL specialist and classroom teachers. Following the course, I sent this assignment back to Eileen. I thought the assignment had been well done, and Eileen had suggested perhaps seeing some of the students' work. I asked Charlene if this was acceptable, and she was happy to share her assignment with Eileen.

Immediately upon reading the assignment, however, Eileen contacted me and asked to meet to discuss inconsistencies in the student's reflection. During this discussion, Eileen explained that she indeed collaborated with classroom teachers, and that the student had actually "got it wrong." I then returned to the student participant and explained the specialist's concerns.

This exchange exemplifies to me the importance of student participants collaborating more deeply with community partners and perhaps allowing them access to student work. I also wonder about the possibility of students working collaboratively with community partners to produce reflections or other artifacts that would represent their key learning from the experiences. It seems important and fair that community participants have access to how their student partners experienced the experience. However, it would seem unfair and perhaps hindering to student development if they had to share their reflections with community

partners. As an instructor, I want my students to feel that they can be free and critical in their reflections. I think that if those reflections were being shared with community partners, students would censor themselves, and deep, insightful, and important reflections might never rise to the surface.

All of these examples allude to a problematic aspect of moving students out of the university classroom and into the greater community without perhaps providing them with a chance to collaborate deeply with partners and debrief emerging ideas with classmates and instructors. The issues illustrated above involve students being exposed to potentially damaging ideas and attitudes by community experts, or students themselves uncovering or articulating their own potentially damaging ideas. Of course, the construction of negative ideas about ESL learners could still happen in a classroom or a course void of community interaction. Yet, this data was troubling to me because it was unexpected.

In light of these responses, I find one of my own assumptions being challenged. I believed that experiential and meaningful engagement in the community would inevitably lead to preservice teachers becoming more aware of the lived experience of ESL learners, as well as how to best address their needs. Admittedly, I did not foresee the development of generalizations and potentially damaging ideas about ESL learners, such as Chinese households promoting the use of scissors or most female Asian students being “sent away” to cover up scandalous learning disabilities.

The above examples also highlight and challenge my normal approach to assessment and evaluation. In agreeing to participate in the community-based assignment, students were

required to take some risks. Moving into the community, working with members of the community, asking questions, and reflecting on their understandings is a significant task. I see now just how significant that task was and how big that risk would be for some students. Perhaps I let my own enthusiasm for the pedagogy overtake some other important pedagogical principles, like basic formative assessment. I was somewhat naïve to forget this step, and perhaps focused too much on just getting students "out there," and not enough time on debriefing and assessing their experiences. In this case, however, debriefing, mediating material and assessing in formative ways should have been even more important given what I believed would be transformative learning experiences.

In an effort to address the theory from the course, as well as have a strong community-based focus, I left little time at the end of the course for students and the instructor to deeply and meaningfully debrief the experience. Moving forward, I would do this differently; I would dedicate more time for this debriefing, specifically by having reflections due earlier in the term, conducting small-group in-class debrief sessions, and scheduling office hours for one-on-one sessions as well.

I also identify that as an instructor I might not apply the same critical/ researcher/ data analysis lens to designing a course; however, conducting this action-research project provides a different perspective on my class. By researching this course—collecting and analyzing data, looking for connections, and most importantly, writing about it—I was more critically reflective than when I am solely an instructor. Overall, the above discussion provides me with a stronger

understanding of the role for collaboration between students and community members, as well as more focused debriefing and assessment post-experience.

Also interesting to note is that all of the examples that emerged from the data analysis that relate to the potential to create or reify somewhat negative generalizations about certain groups of ESL learners were drawn from school-based experiences. In light of these results, how should schools figure into community-based placements in future courses, if at all? I address this issue further in the following section.

School as Community

Originally I conceptualized "community" as all the relevant people and places that existed beyond schools. I sought to maintain the experiential process of a small-scale, informal practicum, but in environments that existed beyond elementary schools. I believed that schools offered a certain type of experience for preservice teachers, but that other environments like non-profit organizations, settlement agencies, and community centers were being overlooked as potentially powerful and engaging sites of learning for preservice teachers. According to Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzman (2006), schools often fail to build on the variability, hybridity, and sense-making processes that exist in out-of-school environments. Similarly, I believed preservice teachers needed to start thinking about the social, cultural, and multilingual practices that inform the identities of ESL learners, and I believed they needed to start doing this in the community as part of their teacher education programs. And as was demonstrated to me by facilitating community-based experiences, students like Lucy, for

example, were able to see multilingual practices in a homework club and apply that experience to her emerging understanding of ESL pedagogy.

I also believed that non-school-based experiential learning for preservice teachers was of particular interest to the area of ESL teaching and learning. I had recognised a predominant lack of knowledge in my students about their understandings of immigration, refugees, culture and diversity. If I could connect preservice teachers to ESL communities beyond the classroom, I believed their understanding of ESL learners, and their multiplicity of identities could be improved. I thought that if they continued to work only in schools, they would be missing out on relevant experts and their stories. I believed these experts and these stories could enhance, supplement and even transform the knowledge they gained institutionally. I wanted to structure my course accordingly, and investigate how and if at all small-scale, informal community-based learning affected understandings of ESL teaching and learning. I also wanted to assess the value of community-based learning as a pedagogical tool in teacher education programs. My goal was to experiment with my own style of teaching by moving away from traditional university-based knowledge and instead have students co-constructing their knowledge beyond the classroom, in the community, through dialogue and experience.

However, I did not so much replace university knowledge with experience and knowledge from the community as much as I added it to the course. By adding it, rather than replacing it, students and community members were not able to go as deep into their relationships, and not able to build as much trust that would facilitate for sharing and, in turn, more understanding. Both student participants and community participants expressed a desire to go deeper and to be more involved, yet cited time and scheduling as challenges to this goal.

I can see now from the data collected and the categories and themes that have arisen, that replacing university-based knowledge should continue to be one of the objectives in using community-based teaching and learning. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I was challenged by my department chair cautioning me that any off-campus experience had to be implemented only in addition to on-campus contact hours. In the future, however, I would challenge those ideas by replacing time devoted to classroom-based knowledge with time devoted to community-based knowledge. In such a course, a flipped or blended model, content such as readings, written assignments, videos, etc. would be available for students in an online platform, or learning management system. Placing content such as this online frees up class time for other more interactive activities. I discuss the flipped classroom and how it might be used in community-based courses later in this chapter. I think that this model might be an effective way to increase accessibility to classroom-based knowledge while allowing flexibility for learners to engage with the community.

One challenge in undertaking this research was a difficulty in obtaining enough non-school based environments to which I could send students. The city in which this research took place had a population of only 300 000. There were only two community-based non-profit organizations, and only one community center that offered programming for non-native speakers. I had 32 students to place, and did not want to be overly demanding on any one organization. Furthermore, not everyone I contacted at these organizations was able to participate in the project for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons included time restrictions, lack of experience, and the vulnerability of certain groups of people. For example, I had heard of an art-therapy program being offered for refugee youth. I had hoped to partner

with this program and to place 1-2 students with the facilitator to work in some way with the art therapy program. It became clear, however, that this art-therapy group would not benefit from a short-term placement of preservice teachers, especially given the delicate nature of the issues the program was addressing, and the importance of building trust over time.

This example illustrates the importance of building trust through equitable and authentic relationships as an essential part of the planning and maintenance of community-university partnerships. Relationships and partnerships in which each group/community benefits and in which partners are committed to the continual learning, growth and mutual benefit of each other are necessary. However, in order to create such trusting and authentic partnerships, participants need time to connect with one another over time.

For this reason, one-time visits are not enough; students, instructors and community partners will need to be committed for more than a few hours. A relationship that engenders trust will grow through time, from semester to semester, across courses and across curriculum. As will be discussed in the later, universities or departments committed to creating and maintaining such mutually beneficial partnerships in learning will need to provide support to instructors and community partners.

However, support for these partnerships is already being exemplified in a number of post-secondary settings through the creation and maintenance of on-campus centers and programs that function as intermediaries between partners. Having specialized on-campus support for community-based teaching and learning ensures that high quality partnerships are maintained, that course-based learning objectives align with community needs, and that reciprocity is being sought.

Being unable to find enough community placements, I decided to expand my definition of "community" to include schools. Initially, I resisted doing this; the entire basis of this project was to go beyond the classroom, to address what Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres-Guzman (2006) have identified as a lack of understanding about the identities of ESL learners beyond the school. I wanted to challenge preservice teachers to think about how environments other than practicums and schools could inform them and their identities and understandings as emerging teachers. I saw the learning that would take place in schools and in communities as different. To me, in schools, preservice teachers would learn about lesson plans, curriculum, time tables and politics; in the community I believed they would learn more about the lived experience of immigrants and refugees. In the community I thought they would hear about where ESL learners came from, what challenges their parents had in terms of adapting to the school system, what challenges settlement workers had working with teachers. I saw the community as offering a different type of engagement, one that was not focused on how to teach, but on learners and their lives.

In schools, I thought preservice teachers would observe, be given handouts, and engage with teachers and maybe some students. But in the community, they would have to engage with ESL parents, teachers, social workers, youth group facilitators. The learning would not be so direct and teacher-focused, but they would still be challenged to use what they observed and what they heard, and what they did to make meaning about teaching. Basically, I saw the community as an indirect yet extremely relevant and engaging place to construct understanding about ESL teaching, but more importantly, ESL students. Nonetheless, I included

three schools in my project in order to ensure that all students in my course would have a site beyond the university in which to engage.

At first I thought I would not include the data from these placements in my data analysis. I would include the placements in the course in order to ensure that students in the course had somewhere to go and some experience upon which to base subsequent assignments, but I would omit these students and their data from my final findings. Going through the data, however, I began to see how rich the school-based experiences were, and how at times these experiences resulted in exactly what I was not expecting—students articulating biased understandings of ESL learners.

For this reason, I now see school-based experiences as rich and informative places from which students can create knowledge, even if that knowledge has the potential to harm ESL learners. It is this potential for harm that needs to be addressed within teacher education programs, where instructors working collaboratively with students and schools can identify potential problems or assumptions and work to disrupt them.

Ease and enthusiasm

One major observation I noted during this project was the enthusiasm of ESL specialists and school administrators about participating. It was clear that ESL specialists and the schools in which they worked wanted preservice teachers in their schools to observe, learn, ask questions, and help. Similarly, there was and continues to be an overwhelming interest on behalf of students to be placed in schools. In post-course questionnaires, many students who did not participate in a school-based placement indicated that they would have liked to, either in place of their original placement or in addition to that placement. As an instructor and

researcher I cannot deny the existence of this enthusiasm, both from students and from schools. I am continuing to wonder if this enthusiasm warrants structuring the course to include school-based placements in addition to community-based placements. If I structure a course to provide two experiences, I worry that students will not go deep enough into one experience. That being said, perhaps two placements with ample time devoted to each will provide students with a richer and more holistic perspective on teaching ESL than one experience alone.

At first the eagerness of students to be in schools needled me. I was passionate about getting them into the community, and had hoped they would be thrilled to be doing something experiential and in the community. I asked myself why they did not share my passion, and what I could do to inspire them more to want to be in the community, connecting with others and pushing themselves to connect place-based learning beyond schools with their growth and understanding as preservice teachers.

Reflecting on this, I thought that perhaps I needed to do more in the first part of the course to encourage students to be more interested and invested in the idea of community-based learning. It is reasonable to expect students to want to be in schools; but I wanted to encourage them to appreciate non-school based environments as well. Perhaps I could have assigned more articles about innovative community-based teaching projects and tied those articles to in-class discussion. I also thought that having a panel discussion in the first week or two in which members of participating community organizations came to the class to discuss what they did and how partnerships might look. I also thought about having students who

participated in previous sections of the course come to speak to the class about how their experiences had benefitted them.

I also hoped that the interest in community-based learning might come retroactively—after the students had participated in their community placements. I trusted that their experiences in the community would be powerful and transformative and then they would be satisfied with not being placed in a school. But even after the experiences were completed, some students still wished they had been in a school.

Why are students so interested in school-based placements? Perhaps schools, unlike non-school environments, provide an opportunity for students to network. In schools, preservice teachers can meet teachers and principals and make themselves known. They can suggest volunteering upon completion of the course (a few have done this), and this might endear them to schools and TOC lists once they have graduated. It allows them to build their resume in a school-specific way, as well as their connections and their practical teaching skills. Those student participants who worked in schools for their placements were often given worksheets, templates, handouts, assessment literature, and other information that they could take away and tuck into their portfolios for future use. Working in schools also gave students time to connect with established teachers and discuss with them a variety of issues related to ESL and other areas, like how to get a job. Clearly, students see the pragmatic advantages to working and learning in a school-based environment. But as an educator, I see the conceptual advantages of having preservice teachers in both school and community environments and pushing them to consider how different place-based experiences inform their understandings of teaching and learning.

In the BEd program in which this course was offered, working with ESL specialists is not an option during regular practicums. ESL specialists are not considered classroom teachers when it comes to practicum placements, and practicums require students to be placed with classroom teachers. It is possible to partner with an ESL specialist if students opt to complete an alternative practicum, but it appears from my conversations with students and ESL specialists that there is little if any awareness of this option. In order for students to be paired with an ESL specialist, they would have to request this during their first three week practicum, long before they complete the ESL curriculum course and perhaps before an interest in working with ESL learners is developed. Furthermore, ESL specialists in the community would have to make themselves known to the practicum office, and many ESL specialists are completely unaware of this option. For this reason, ESL specialists, practicum placement administrators, and students will need to be made aware of this option, and hopefully the work contained in this dissertation will help inform such awareness-raising processes.

Because preservice teachers and ESL specialists seldom come together, this experience was unique to our course and obviously of interest to many of the students. For this reason as well, ESL specialists had the chance to have a preservice teacher to work with, an opportunity they are not able to have as practicums require students to be paired with classroom teachers. ESL specialists in British Columbia receive their specialist designations in a variety of ways. According to Beardsmore (2008):

> …an ESL specialist teacher can be identified according to the following three categories: possessing a Professional Teaching Certificate and basic classroom experience; training in methodology, cross-cultural sensitization and strategy training, multicultural studies, first and second language learning, and applied linguistics; or having relevant practical experience such as living in another culture for a period of time...[or]... learning another language (Ministry of

> Education, 1999, pg.17). These are only suggested minimum qualifications, and the Ministry does not monitor the hiring practices of districts to ensure that these minimum qualifications are being upheld (p.2).

Based on Beardsmore's assertions, many ESL specialists are given the specialist designation without an ESL-specific practicum. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the context of this study, ESL specialists appreciated an opportunity to "give back" and "mentor" emerging teachers. These perceived advantages mirror other community-based participants' feelings of validation, and once again the university can facilitate this sense of validation by collaborating with the expertise of the community.

As an instructor setting up a community-based experience, I also found working with schools extremely easy. Schools are accustomed to having volunteers and practicum students, so it was easy for them to accommodate us. This is a contrast to some of the community-based participants who had never had a practicum student or whose schedules and priorities are different from that of a school. As mentioned earlier, community organizations or individuals do not necessarily have free time for meetings, debriefings, and projects during the typical school or university hours. Also, schools are interested in preservice teachers and can identify their relevant roles in helping educate them, as seen through practicums. Community organizations may or may not have ever worked with practicum students or the university in any capacity.

The parents in this project and the newly formed immigrant women's support group offer examples of this disconnect. Neither of these community partners had participated in university-driven projects before. Furthermore, partners such as these may not have ever considered partnering with preservice teachers, although members of both groups

acknowledged that they were invested in raising awareness of ESL students. For these reasons, it was more challenging from an organizational perspective to set up placements in non-school environments where they are used to working around university schedules and are relatively flexible with scheduling volunteer opportunities. This difference in organizational culture and experience needs to be considered by instructors interested in implementing similar projects. Although community-based participants were enthusiastic about the project, scheduling challenges were much more pronounced than with the school-based participants.

Admittedly, I have wondered if it would be easier to schedule all the placements within schools given the enthusiasm and commitment of the schools, the ESL specialists and the students. My goal in designing and implementing a community-based approach to learning, however, was to connect preservice teachers with ESL learners, ESL practitioners, and ESL families outside the classroom and have those preservice teachers consider how these experiences were informing their understandings and their identities as emerging teachers. I want to believe there is more to this pedagogical intent than just the ease with which an instructor can organize it.

The trouble with schools

In the data from this study, however, school-based placements unearthed more troubling areas related to ESL teaching and learning than other placements. The students who recounted or articulated potentially damaging understandings about ESL learners all completed their placements in schools. In choosing to use community-based learning in an ESL curriculum course, I intended to provide an opportunity for students to acknowledge their assumptions about ESL learners, to potentially disrupt any damaging ones, and to inform their

understandings in positive ways. Surprisingly, in some instances (all of which occurred in school-based environments), unexpected assumptions or ideas were articulated by the students in their post-placement assignments and reflections. For example, one preservice teacher suggested they would be careful in the future when working with female Asian students, wondering if they were being sent away to school in Canada because of learning disabilities, an assumption informed by conversations with school administrators. What does this say about the climate of schools and the perceptions of established teachers, especially in regards to teaching minority language learners? I believe this question opens up possibilities for future research to investigate the attitudes and assumptions of schools and agents within schools towards ESL learners. Perhaps research projects that seek to connect current ESL practitioners and other school-based teachers, support staff, and administrators with ESL communities and organizations might be one way to assess, and perhaps challenges some of these understandings.

Perhaps these understandings lay dormant in preservice teachers and are difficult to tap into in a regular university classroom setting. But by connecting the students to the community and encouraging their reflections of that experience, instructors can gain valuable insight into potentially damaging ideas and can in turn address those ideas. In so doing, instructors can raise critical awareness of student participants' own assumptions, perhaps needed to be deconstructed for students and presented in a way that encourages students to challenge their own assumptions. Therefore, what these examples show is not necessarily how community-based learning can challenge assumptions, but how it might prove to be a catalyst from which

damaging assumptions emerge and can be meaningfully and critically addressed by instructors and their students in the classroom.

In this case, the community-based experience offers a potentially problematic environment of learning, another place from which students can collect information and forge understandings that they can then apply to their pedagogy. This example illustrates what happens when community-based participants have assumptions of their own, assumptions that could be incorrect or damaging, and they pass these assumptions on to student partners. What arises here is a concern for instructors interested in implementing community-based teaching and learning: how can we mitigate potential damage but at the same time acknowledge and respect the expertise of "experts" outside of our classrooms? What emerges is the realization that these biases exist and there is potential for them to be passed on to students, or to be created and articulated by students.

It was naïve of me to believe that the knowledge constructed from community-based experiences would all be positive. However, even if knowledge is not positive it is still significant and needs to be addressed. Instructors need to be aware of this possibility and include strategies and activities that will help students critically evaluate their assumptions. Debrief mechanisms like journals, reflections, or blogs may be useful for instructors to gauge what is happening and what is evolving out of community-based experiences. Instructors need to schedule time to work collaboratively with students and community partners in order to investigate reflections and other articulations of knowledge and assumptions that emerge from community-based experiences.

In my case, I failed to do this effectively. Although I connected reflective exercises and assignments to the community-based experience, they were submitted toward the end of term and I did not leave enough time at the end of the course to revisit these significant assumptions, and to debrief with students their ideas.

The assignment was due toward the end of term and by the time all assignments were graded, the course had finished. Furthermore, I might not have been able to identify the potential damage inherent in such statements had I not been conducting an analysis of the data for this study. Of course, I would like to think that I would nonetheless revise my next class to address the subtle ways in which we other students in our pedagogical journeys. However, when the assignment became part of the data analysis my view of the assignment changed, and the lens through which I viewed it also changed. I was no longer reading the assignment for a grade; I was reading and re-reading the assignment in a critical and analytical way to uncover themes that would shape this very chapter of my research. Through a scholarly lens, I uncovered this insight, reinforcing the importance of researching our teaching in just this way. I may have missed this insight had I simply been evaluating assignments. But I was doing more than evaluating assignments—I was analyzing data in the hope of engaging students in an asset- based approach to ESL teaching and learning. A significant by-product of this research is the insights I've gained into the processes of teaching adult learners like these undergraduate preservice teachers. The insight that emerges here influences my own pedagogy and shapes how I will structure the course in the future, ensuring more collaborative opportunities between students, instructors, and community members, as well as more focused debriefing of student work.

As troubling as this appears to be, it is valuable for instructors to have access to student reflections and emerging understandings, especially if these understandings reflect biases or generalizations that could negatively affect how preservice teachers conceptualize ESL learners and ultimately teach them. Instructors of community-based courses, therefore, need to assess these understandings and develop strategies to address them in the classroom.

For future courses, I would change this in order to allow enough turn-around time within the course to address these precarious areas more directly with students if need be. Specifically, I would require community-based placements and assignments to be submitted at least four weeks before the end of term. This would enable me to review and mark the assignments and engage students in debriefing sessions, individually and as a class. In order to do this, however, I would have to have placements ready to go almost immediately from the start of term and so would be structuring those possible placements weeks before the semester began. I would then have to introduce community-based teaching and learning during the first week or two of the course. During this time, I could possibly have students engaging in readings and other sources related to place-based education and community-based teaching and learning, as well as facilitating discussions and reflections on how such experiential, and at times service-oriented, learning experiences in the community are important and necessary for preservice teachers. In order to restructure the course in this way, however, I would once again consider a flipped model, in which much of this content could be delivered online. Using this model would free up more class time to discuss concepts related to community-based learning, as well as class time to engage in community-based placements.

During these introductory weeks, I would also provide more detailed and focused information on each placement, perhaps, as mentioned earlier, by inviting potential community-partners into the class for a round-table discussion on their organizations or their positions in the community, and how they would like to engage with preservice teachers to encourage more informed and interactive understandings of ESL youth and their families. Students would have to pick experiences by the end of the fourth week of class in order to have time to connect with their respective placements, complete their placements, and work on their final projects and reflections.

Clearly, including all of this content into 13 weeks means that existing curriculum related to second language acquisition, cross-cultural understanding, lesson-planning, materials support, etc. would have to be modified, or perhaps even omitted. In my opinion, omitting this material would be untenable. Although I have not delved into this here in these pages, I feel that the non-community-based elements of the course—the lesson planning, the articles, the theory on second language acquisition—are rich. From this material, and the ways in which we engage with it, I have experienced students "getting it,"—those "aha" moments that I observe in class and then read about in student journals. Furthermore, having taught the course, and as these findings show, I have seen how the theoretical elements of the course are amplified through the community-based placement, and that is what I find so powerful about this pedagogy—it brings life and context to the theory. The question becomes how to balance these two necessary objectives within the course—the theory behind teaching ESL and the experience of situated and meaningful learning in the community.

One possible solution is to “flip” the classroom. "Flipping" the classroom refers to a variety of teaching strategies that free up class time for active learning without sacrificing necessary content. These strategies ask students to learn some new material at home in order to free up class time for engaging interactively in higher level thinking skills such as evaluating, applying and problem solving (Berrett, 2012). The strategy that I would use to free up class time for community engagement would be to use an online learning management platform such as Moodle or Desire2Learn. By using a blended approach, much of the classroom-based material could be engaged with online through reading assignments, discussion forums, videos, etc. More class time could therefore be devoted to setting up the project, informing students of community partners, reflecting and debriefing. I also believe that by flipping the classroom there may be more flexibility around “classroom” hours which would free up time for students to be engaging in the community. Here I begin to see potential for future research in how we can blend online environments in teacher education programs in order to free up more time for engagement both in the classroom and beyond.

In acknowledging that students needed more time to engage deeply and meaningfully with the community, I identify how some of my own assumptions were challenged through this project. I had somewhat idealistically believed that the community would take care of the students. Students would engage and come away with positive, useful understandings that would make them better suited to work with ESL learners. For example, I believed they would meet parents over a cup of coffee, hear their stories about how they struggled to communicate and understand their child’s classroom teacher, and then the preservice teachers would have a heightened awareness of how important it is to interact and communicate effectively and

sensitively with parents of their ESL students. In some cases, however, the very community provided an opportunity for students to form potentially troubling understandings, and these ideas needed to be addressed directly in the course and students needed to be given opportunities to acknowledge the potentially troubling nature of their assumptions. This is where I began to develop a deeper understanding of the role of critical reflection, and my role in facilitating that.

In this way, the community did not always disrupt damaging assumptions; at times it facilitated them. But this does not mean that students should not be engaging with schools in community-based learning initiatives. On the contrary, schools need to be considered part of the community for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the fact that it schools, unlike non-school environments, could actually be contributing to the development of stereotypes. Preservice teachers therefore need to be in schools, and in the community, and their instructors need to pay keen attention to what is happening in community placements, and to provide opportunities and time for students to reflect, independently and as part of a group, on how their knowledge and attitudes are evolving.

Furthermore, I believe that arising out of this study is a question related to how certain educators and educational settings might be perpetuating deficit understandings when it comes to ESL learners. I believe more research needs to assess the attitudes and understandings of ESL practitioners or other school-based agents currently working to serve ESL learners.

School-based experiences and language

For the preservice teachers who worked with ESL specialists in school-based placements, language and teaching themes were most strongly highlighted. In their reflections on these school-based experiences, student-participants who worked with ESL specialists drew a number of connections between course-based readings on methods of instruction and the methods of instruction that they actually witnessed. Students whose placements were not in school-based environments, however, also made concrete connections between their experiences in the community and the more theoretical work addressed within course readings and discussions; however, these connections were largely related to issues of culture, communication, and resources in the community. This is not to say that language and language teaching was not alluded to by students engaging outside of schools; rather it was more prominent in the three groups who worked in school-based environments.

Obviously, strategies of language teaching are a major area of the course, and directly related to course objectives. By having school-based placements, student participants were able to gain more first-hand experience of how ESL is actually taught in schools than participants who worked with other community-based placements. Having this experience is beneficial to preservice teachers whether they become ESL specialists or not. By being situated in schools and working with ESL specialists, preservice teachers experience the practice of ESL teaching and learning. They connect with actual teachers, they see how lesson plans and materials are developed, and they connect with ESL learners. This direct connection to language teaching was clearly a benefit of having students work with ESL specialists, and within schools. Furthermore, students who did not work in schools often commented that they wished they had worked in schools in place of the community, or in addition to their

community-based placement, in order to improve their language teaching skills. Doing two placements, however, would have been impossible given the length of the course, but perhaps could be achieved in a flipped classroom, or through a more robust offering as mentioned earlier.

Although my impetus for designing this course around community-based engagement was not necessarily language specific, in reviewing the data on this project I wanted to examine how, if at all, this community-based project informed preservice teachers' understandings of language and language teaching. The calendar description of this course lists areas covered as language instruction and language assessment alongside cultural sensitivity. Although I felt there had to be value in engaging with the community outside of the university and outside the mainstream classroom, I did not have specific ideas of what that value would entail. I conceptualized the advantages of the project holistically, and assumed I would discover what specific value, and what specific counter-value the project had through researching the process. During the data analysis, however, I discovered that the themes that were emerging for me did not specifically point to issues of language. Given that the course is entitled Teaching English as a Second Language, I thought that maybe issues of language should be more prominent when analyzing the effects of the community-based project. With that in mind, I revisited the data, looking specifically for evidence of how the project was, if at all, informing understandings of language and teaching language.

In the previous chapter I used data to illustrate how student participants working with ESL specialists made observations on their experiences that at times critiqued the ESL specialists' lessons. As the instructor, I admittedly appreciate students taking a critical look at

what they are observing. I encourage them as emerging teachers to question what they are experiencing. Most often they do so as the above example illustrates, but substantiating that criticism with suggestions for improvement, and they often do so with concrete reference to the theory and practice. This is not to say that their suggestions are always correct, but their suggestions might resonate with them more so than some of the techniques that they are witnessing outside of the university classroom.

With empathy towards the teachers, however, one might suggest that preservice teachers do not have the knowledge or experience to critique teachers in this way. Can they make informed critiques based on the knowledge they have gained in two years of teacher education, and in a few weeks in an ESL methods course? As well, upon discovering that they are being critiqued by up-and-comers, would ESL teachers be inclined to pull their support from this partnership?

The focus of the experience is open-ended. Every community-based experience is going to be different and even two students engaging in the same project will experience it differently. The purpose is for students to engage, through action and dialogue, and to apply those experiences to their emerging understandings of teaching and learning, and to their identities as teachers. It is not about what is right or wrong teaching, but more so what makes sense to preservice teachers. I wanted students to think about what is meaningful to them, and to examine what they experienced, reflecting on it personally in order to build their knowledge and their skills as new teachers. I want students to have freedom in their engagement, even if that means being critical of partners. But perhaps this needs to be communicated clearly to

students and community partners, and instructors need to make sure that community partners understand that students are encouraged to examine and reflect on their experiences from a variety of lenses, including a critical one.

In examining how understandings of language and language teaching are informed by this project, I have uncovered a contentious issue. On the one hand, I want my students to be critical. I want them to question the use of random worksheets, decontextualized lessons, and a lack of collaboration between pull-out programs and the mainstream curriculum. Yet I also want them to be respectful of the partners that have graciously agreed to share their expertise. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, the school-based partners were keenly interested in participating in this project. Likewise, the students in the course demonstrated an acute enthusiasm to be placed in a school for this project. It would appear like a commonsensical match. But what happens when the expertise of the community partner is questioned by yet-to-be teachers who are trying to make sense of teaching ESL?

I find myself asking, in an effort to address inclusivity of minority language learners, did I put community partners and in particular teachers at risk for being excluded and questioned? This question hints at the ethical implications that need to be considered when embarking on community-based teaching and learning opportunities. In order to find more ways to share knowledge, and create reciprocal experiences in which all participants are active agents in the creation of new knowledge, more course time needs to be devoted to the community-based projects. Time would be needed for preservice teachers to provide feedback to their partner teachers, or perhaps design and teach a lesson of their own, thereby providing an example for

the partner instructor that may encapsulate not their critique, but their suggestions and recommendations. As well, during the design of the projects, the instructor could collaborate more closely with ESL specialists, and other partners, to determine how students and ESL specialists could work together more meaningfully to build knowledge rather than just students experiencing their expertise and questioning it later in a reflection. Perhaps they could be encouraged to co-design materials and lessons. As well, perhaps reflections could be created together. These are ideas I intend to suggest and experiment with further in subsequent sections of the course.

In a subsequent section of the course, I had the opportunity to restructure the course based on my interpretations of the data from this project. For this reason, I have encouraged more sustained and substantial participation on the part of the students. In one recent example, a group of three students partnered with an ESL specialist in an elementary school, working with her on five different occasions. Their efforts culminated in being allowed to design and implement a lesson of their own. They, like many students, were slightly critical of what they observed but did not share these ideas with the partner teacher. But they were able to implement a context-rich, engaging, and well-liked lesson for the ESL students. In their reflection, students noted the enthusiasm of the partner teacher and her desire to have the lesson plan and notes for future reference. This situation presents an alternative to the aforementioned issue of being critical of gracious partners: allowing preservice teachers to be critical of their experiences but to share those critiques in a productive and meaningful way through the design and implementation of what they would see as an effective lesson. And the

partner teacher would be able to evaluate this lesson as she wanted, perhaps bringing her own critical reflection to it as well.

To summarize, school-based placements were easy to set up and in high demand on the student side. Convincing students, therefore, of the value of non-school based placements and to be committed to the idea of community-based learning was more challenging than I expected. As well, the fact that school-based placements were offered as a choice in this project might have affected the popularity of non-school-based experiences. Furthermore, school-based placements appealed to both students and teachers because they were similar to practicums but on a smaller, more informal scale which was welcomed by teachers and school administrators. The informal nature of this experience meant less paperwork, less scheduling, and less work for schools, teachers and administrators than more formal placements like practicums. Furthermore, ESL specialists gained experience mentoring students, something they are unable to do in a more formal practicum setting given their non-classroom teacher status. School-based placements also addressed more directly the language side of ESL teaching and learning which was of importance to students, the instructor, and the objectives of the course.

In addition to these advantages, however, these placements appeared to render more deficit understandings of ESL learners, and ESL teaching and learning. Rather than see this aspect as a disadvantage to utilizing schools, I would argue that including schools encourages the inclusion of such opportunities and is necessary in order for instructors to help students acknowledge and disrupt assumptions, especially post-placement. In other words, I am not discouraged as an instructor by the assumptions that arose from some of the school-based

placements; rather I acknowledge that school-based placements (and perhaps other community placements) may encourage such assumptions and that while preservice teachers are still in teacher education programs these assumptions can be brought to the surface for them and examined. Furthermore, through more collaborative processes, perhaps these assumptions can be reflected upon critically by students, community partners and instructors in the hopes of encouraging more asset-oriented understandings.

So do we even need the "community"?

With the completion of this study, I feel that both school-based and non-school based environments were dynamic sites of learning, where students created understandings that I believe they would not have had in the university classroom alone. Whether it was through speaking to immigrant parents about their expectations of the school system, helping to facilitate a youth group, or working with an ESL specialist, student participants' experiential and social processes resulted in reflections and new knowledge that could not have been gained as authentically or as credibly in the classroom. I believe that Jaime's new-found understanding of how racism affects youth in our community was more organic and powerful when he met and discussed these issues with an immigrant youth than if he were just reading a PowerPoint slide about it. Those experiences, and the knowledge that grows from them upon reflection, present a powerful and social means of creating knowledge that hopefully will remain with students long after the course is completed, and hopefully in a more transformative way than that of course notes and quizzes. To determine this, however, more long term studies will have to be done. I discuss some of the potential future research areas in the final chapter.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

It was through the process of researching my own teaching that I came to the insights I realized on the role of schools in community-based learning. In applying a scholarly lens and formalizing my teaching process, I engaged in data analysis—looking for themes, categories and patterns. It was by doing this analysis that I uncovered that potentially damaging ideas were being articulated by students, and that these ideas tended to come from school-based placements. I may not have come to this conclusion as an instructor alone. I would have evaluated the assignments, perhaps noting simplistically in the margins that students "be careful not to generalize here" when they mused about all Chinese girl students having learning disabilities. But in this case, I took on the role of an instructor-researcher, and I believe that changed how I assessed and reflected on the course. I collected data and looked at assignments differently—analyzing reflections, responses and discourses closely. In doing so, I came to understand the importance of monitoring closely what emerges from community-based placements, and not idealistically trusting that any community would provide positive, unbiased places of learning. And this is where I must acknowledge and challenge one of my own assumptions—that sending students into the community or a school and having them do something would always inevitably be positive.

Admittedly, I assumed that a community-based approach would be an effective and powerful way to incorporate community knowledge into my course, and meet course-based objectives. Everyone was going to love it and everyone was going to learn something. I see now how simplistic and ignorant that assumption was. I was passionate about the approach, and perhaps that passion shadowed what I know, or should know, about effective teaching and

learning. My passion and my assumptions steered me away from thoughtfully reflecting on what the students would need both before and after their community experience. These assumptions may also have overshadowed the element of risk involved in this assignment. I forgot and perhaps never knew how risky an experience like this might be for many preservice teachers. In hindsight, I would have done more work in class around risks, eliciting from students how they felt about where they were going and what they were going to experience.

In this way, being a researcher-instructor was extremely valuable to improving my pedagogy. Furthermore, only by researching my teaching in this more formal way by completing an in-depth data analysis, did I come to these themes and understandings. For example, only by interviewing community partners did I come to know how some of them felt validated by being approached by the university. By pouring over the data as I did, I came to see subtle ways in which school-based experiences were creating assumptions and generalizations about certain minority language learners. And by analyzing these stories and seeking to represent them, I turned an even more critical eye on my own processes and learned from a very situated perspective why I need to facilitate more opportunities for deep critical reflection.

All of these insights shaped my understandings and continue to shape my pedagogy, and as will be discussed in Chapter 7, my professional journey. Having completed this project, I now see how action research, and research into my teaching, can result in insights and changes that go far beyond the classroom.

Supporting and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

Admittedly, I am an instructor committed to community-based learning. This style of teaching made sense to me before I implemented this project, and upon completion I feel even more enthusiasm about the necessity of seeking out innovative ways to connect preservice teachers with experts in the community. But as I reach the end of this study, I wonder if this style of teaching will appeal to or inspire other instructors. Despite universities and other post-secondary institutions continually incorporating the discourse of engagement and community engagement into strategic and academic plans, how that engagement is taken up in a teaching and learning context is not always known. For example, at the time of writing the University of Victoria has no centralized inventory or database of community-based courses, and those instructors who are engaging in the community are perhaps, like me, doing so intrinsically without much institutional support.

Instructors might feel that organizing placements in the absence of department or community support and building meaningful relationships with community partners would be prohibitively time-consuming. My own reflections on the process reveal a large time commitment required to research potential partners, set up initial meetings, meet with them, discuss what community-based learning is and why it is important, get their input on the project, and continue to maintain open-communication and feedback. I was committed to doing all of this, and found it enhanced my knowledge of ESL learners, their families, and their needs and interests as articulated by them and those who serve them. Clearly, engaging as I did made me a more knowledgeable instructor of ESL pedagogy. Simply put, this project made me a better instructor.

I would argue this would make any instructor more aware of the local, regional, or perhaps global issues connected to their course content. By facilitating this project, I learned about programs in the community, funding opportunities, current issues facing immigrants and refugees in schools and in the community, and what other research was being done. It furthered my own understandings in a dynamic and hands-on way that connected me dialogically and physically with practitioners in the community. I felt that I was part of the community and this awareness informed my teaching and my credibility.

This process, however, was time consuming, and not all instructors will want to or think they are able to devote such time to a project, or to their teaching. As a sessional instructor and a PhD student I was busy, but I was not a full-time professor with teaching and research commitments as well as administrative duties. I perhaps had a little more time than other instructors will have.

Without the commitment to and passion about community-based learning, many instructors may turn away from engaging the community as part of their pedagogy because of the work and time commitment involved. Having completed this project, I would argue that the benefits to an instructor's knowledge and credibility are a pertinent benefit to using this method of teaching. However, these benefits may not necessarily be valued by all instructors, but hopefully quality teaching and the benefits that community-based learning bring to preservice teachers, community partners and ultimately ESL students will be valued and developed.

I believe that in order to further encourage community engagement and the benefits it has to the community, preservice instructors, and most importantly the future students of

future teachers, whoever they may be, departments, administrators and universities need to find ways to support and encourage such engagement. If community engagement in teacher education is valued, respective departments may want to think about restructuring their focus and curricular intents in order to provide more community-based courses. They may have to consider existing course offerings, identifying which courses lend themselves well to engagement in the community, and think about how to best embed community-based experiences into those courses, or by creating new, follow-up community-engaged courses that allow students to build on the theoretical knowledge of initial courses.

Indeed, many universities in western Canada have centres and programs devoted to assisting faculty in designing and implementing community-based courses. These universities include the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia. Each of these universities offer specialized centres that assist both faculty and students in community-based learning. The centres all employ a variety of specialists who work with faculty assisting them with course design, syllabus design, course objectives, issues of assessment, finding community placements and troubleshooting. Furthermore, these centers often offer grants and workshops to help assist faculty interested in pursuing community-based learning. All of these centers are dedicated to helping faculty by lending expertise in the area of community-based learning, as well as by lending their time and their connections.

For example, the University of British Columbia's Community Learning Initiative (CLI) has worked with over 400 partners, and at the time of writing can account for 48 community-engaged courses. With this database of organizations with which to work, the CLI can draw on

their resources efficiently to assist instructors with the setting up of projects. Similarly, the University of Calgary's Centre for Community Engaged Learning works directly with Volunteer Calgary in order to effectively build relationships between instructors and the community. In this case, organizations in Calgary submit information to the Centre which includes their needs and their interests. In this way, the needs of the community and community-based organizations are articulated by the organizations themselves and this helps create and maintain more reciprocity between the community and the university.

As discussed in this study, building and maintaining relationships is a key element of effective community-based engagement (. Enabling community-based organizations, and other members of the community who may not be part of an organization (i.e. parents of ESL learners), to express their needs and interests and allowing them to shape the project in order to achieve reciprocity is also important. But building those relationships takes time and effort if they are to be forged effectively. A third-party, like a Centre for Community Engagement, can assist instructors not only in determining relevant partners who would benefit from and contribute to a community-based course, but also in providing course design expertise and trouble-shooting if need be.

Furthermore, centralized support services such as these begin to grow networks of community partners. Once these networks are established and relationships continue to grow, there becomes more potential for increased reciprocity between universities and communities. As can be seen in existing community-based teaching and learning programs running at universities such as the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia, community partners begin to engage the university by articulating their own interests and needs, and

university-based resource centres can then assist them in finding relevant and useful partnerships.

Without such a centralized resource and support location, instructors like me are going it alone. We are cold-calling community organizations, building the relationships alone, making our own suggestions based on our needs or on our assumptions of what the community needs, and hoping that the needs of the community will align. Furthermore, instructors may not have all the skills necessary to formulate effective relationships, to design syllabi appropriately, to assess community based projects and assignments well, and to troubleshoot when students and community members struggle. If universities or faculties intend to encourage the dynamic partnerships in learning that community-based teaching and learning can provide, they will need to consider how to provide and continue to provide quality support for such potentially transformative learning opportunities. Furthermore, supporting community-engagement may also mean that education programs and those who administer them need to provide support to students and instructors interested in engagement with the community by creating appropriate schedules that allow for students to move beyond the campus. In order to provide even more support to students, instructors, and community partners, departments may have to seek out the expertise of other community-engaged experts on campus, perhaps situated in teaching and learning centres or community-based research offices, and seek their assistance in the identification of potential partners, and in the effective practice of building and maintaining such partnerships.

Time-tabling and scheduling

A concern that figured prominently in post-course questionnaires and interviews was related to scheduling and time commitments. As findings from this study show, community partners and student participants agreed that more participation would only strengthen the value of their experiences. In order to encourage deeper, richer and more sustained participation in community-based learning, to the benefit of all participants, departments interested in supporting this enriched style of teaching and learning will have to consider how to most effectively structure timetables and scheduling.

Student participants in this study most often carried a heavy course load and worked part-time jobs. In addition to assignments, tests, and shift work, others sometimes volunteered, and all tried to maintain a life beyond school. On the community side, none of the participants were paid extra money or given extra time to take on a student or group of students from the course. They were busy but committed to sharing their expertise and providing preservice teachers with experience. Many community-based participants, however, noted that everyone would have gained by more frequent and more in-depth participation.

To enable this type of participation, departments could assist by scheduling courses in such a way that preservice teachers would have one free morning, afternoon, or day. They could also schedule the course differently; perhaps the course could be offered once a week for three hours. The instructor could then allow for two classes to be used for community-based pursuits, allowing preservice teachers the time to transport themselves to their sites of learning, engage, and return to the university if need be.

Conclusion

In undertaking this research project, I wanted to investigate on a formal level my own teaching methods specifically in regards to implementing a small-scale, informal community-based learning project in a teacher education program. I hoped to study this method from the inside, as a practitioner. I wanted to write about my process in order to contribute insight and inspiration about how community-based learning is being used, and how it might best be used in teacher education and beyond. In this chapter, I focused on the key themes I have discovered by researching my own community-based teaching experience, and proposed recommendations for other educators interested in using community-based engagement in their teaching.

Most notably, the themes that emerge from this study illustrate how school-based placements resulted in some preservice teachers expressing troubling and damaging assumptions about ESL learners. Intending to inform preservice teachers of the real and lived experience of an ESL learner in order to disrupt their damaging assumptions, I counter-intuitively found evidence of the opposite. For this reason, I feel even more strongly about including school-based placements in future community-based courses.

In addition to this finding, similar data has emerged from interviews with Mona (SWIS settlement worker), Connie (immigrant women's group facilitator), Emily and Margaret (youth group facilitators), and Grace and Sumara (parents of ESL learners). All of these individuals expressed concerns about the relationships between teachers and ESL learners and their families. Clearly, there remains a gap between teachers and ESL learners, and teacher

educators, like myself, need to continue to ask how best to facilitate understandings between these groups, and work toward serving ESL learners most effectively in our schools. For me, this means more focused exposure on ESL learners, both in schools and beyond, and facilitated reflections on how these experiences are informing preservice teachers. Clearly, teacher educators cannot wait until teachers are teaching. We need to build into our teacher education programs effective methods with which to mitigate damaging understandings, especially in terms of marginalized second language learners.

In this way, teacher educators are once again encouraged to move away from a skills-based, transmission model for teaching and learning and toward a more social constructivist approach. Top-down transmission models of education do not require the teacher to know much about their learners, and is an approach split off from the everyday lives of the students and the communities in which they live (Pinar, 2004). Community-based learning facilitates a more experiential and social constructivist approach to learning by situating learners in communities in order to grow their understandings through dialogue and experience.

Conceptualizing education this way is by no means a new concept. It goes back to Dewey (1916), an educational philosopher whose pragmatic approach to learning argued that education must take into consideration a student's capacity to learn socially and culturally. Dewey might not have been thinking of teachers per se, but teachers are arguably central agents of social and cultural learning, especially when considering the diversity of classrooms across the country and the rising number of ESL learners in our public education system. It is for this reason that teacher educators and curriculum designers need to critically assess their

current practice and ask themselves how and if at all social constructivist principles apply to their courses and programs. If power and knowledge are viewed as relational and social, then communication is the central process of, and created through, learning (Cooks, Scharrer & Paredes, 2004, p.45). Again, community-based learning becomes a pedagogical approach that works with the principles of social constructivism in teaching and learning.

Furthermore, disrupting direct and top-down approaches in teacher education programs by involving experiential, place-based and community-engaged methods of instruction is also consistent with the goals of 21st century learning. Skills like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation are becoming the foundational framework for educational design and assessment (Kay & Greenhill, 2011). In the British Columbia context, these skills are being embedded into provincial curriculum (Hlady, 2012; BC Ministry of Education, 2010); emerging teachers will be expected to structure their approaches accordingly. In turn, teacher educators need to consider these changes to how teaching and learning is being conceptualized and what expectations are evolving, not only for students but for teachers as well.

Teacher educators will need to continue to assess their programs and how their objectives and methods are aligning with these new goals. Embedded in the community-based pedagogy studied and discussed here is this idea that learners construct meaning through dialogue, experience, and critically challenging their previously held assumptions. Courses with a strong community-based focus tied meaningfully to course objectives and program outcomes (i.e., preparing preservice teachers to work with diverse learners of various cultural

backgrounds) are a way to work toward engaging and preparing preservice teachers to be teachers for the 21st century.

I came to this research project with idealism for situating my students in the community in a way that connected them to people and places that would contextualize course material and that would grow their understandings in significant and meaningful ways. Community-based teaching and learning made sense to me; how could I, a white middle class instructor, credibly teach concepts related to second language learning, especially those concepts that go beyond planning lessons and designing materials? I hoped that by engaging with the community students would have experiences that would be rooted in spaces and dialogue, experiences that would affect them and their identities as teachers and would ultimately make them more effective at teaching minority language learners. I was driven to address the gaps between theory and practice, and between the lived experiences of preservice teachers and those of immigrant and refugee communities. I designed this project and this course around that idealism, and around my own assumption that learning would be more powerful and more transformative if taken beyond the classroom. I explored these ideas with all of my participants and analyzed their reactions to the process. At the end of this project my enthusiasm and idealism surrounding the use of community-based teaching and learning in teacher education is only more fervent.

When Jaime, a student in the course, described how his experience working with immigrant youth reminded him that racism is still a problem and affects youth in negative and troubling ways, I saw the type of transformative experience that has the potential to influence

Jaime's professional understandings and practice in significant and necessary ways. When Connie, the women's support group facilitator, discussed how the students in the course engaged her group in a discussion about problems faced by parents of ESL students, an area that she had not yet explored with the women, I saw how preservice teachers can provide an important perspective that informs community groups and their professional practice. When I, the instructor, realized that school-based experiences lead to significant understandings that needed to be addressed in the class through follow-up discussions and critical reflection, I saw how in applying a critical eye to my teaching I was learning how to make this project better and how to help my students and the community disrupt assumptions about minority language learners. All of these examples reinforce to me the advantages and the importance of structuring courses that meaningfully and powerfully connect these two worlds—the university and the community—in order to build relationships and knowledge that inform our practices and increase our understanding. More than being dynamic and engaging, community based teaching and learning is necessary when we acknowledge the social constructivist nature of learning, the expertise of the community, and the value in partnering with others to enrich student learning. Community-based learning is one way to ensure teacher educators are encouraging these connections and breaking down the barriers between universities and communities, between teachers and their students, and between theory and practice.

Since Ernest Boyer (1990) recommended that university scholarship become more engaged, the higher education landscape has been changing. Recognizing the academic, societal, and economic disconnect between themselves and the neighbourhoods in which they are situated, many institutes of higher education are turning to campus-community

partnerships as a way to address this disconnect (d'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). These community-university partnerships can take a variety of forms depending on how agents like instructors, researchers, students, and perhaps most importantly, community members conceptualize their needs and the benefits of engaging in such partnerships.

In my case, I was an instructor/researcher in the field of education. I was looking for a way to connect my students with members of the community in order to facilitate socially constructed understandings of their future students, and of their future roles as teachers of those students. Furthermore, I was interested in my own pedagogical processes; I wanted to experiment with methods of teaching and learning and apply a critical lens to these processes in order to improve my own constructed understandings, and perhaps contribute to the understandings of other practitioners. I also wanted to use action research methods to learn about teaching through partnerships in the community. It was an experiment in teaching and learning, and through the process my understandings were deepened and my ideology altered.

I learned that as well intentioned as I was in regards to inviting the community into the design process, I often remained the principal designer guiding community partners by suggesting how a project might work and how my course and my students might serve them or their organization. I learned that taking this leadership role does not necessarily negate the partnership process, but often facilitates it by providing community partners with the means they might often need given their traditional positioning in relation to the university. As community-university partnerships continue to grow and gain momentum, I believe that this

relative positioning will change. Institutes of higher education committed to community engagement will realize the importance and the benefit of providing support and structure to community members and instructors/researchers. Indeed, many institutions are already acknowledging this and working toward models that support and grow partnerships and networks. Through these processes, I believe community partners are being acknowledged and incorporated more thoughtfully and significantly into the partnership process and in so doing, universities have the potential to reshape how universities and communities connect and form partnerships.

Support structures like centres for community engagement that maintain relationships virtually through web-space and databases, and socially through communities of practice (CoPs) have the potential to evolve the traditional dynamics between universities and communities so that community partners take the initiative in seeking out the university based on community needs and interests. Instead of community partners articulating a sense of validation for being courted by agents of the university, as was experienced in this study, perhaps the evolution of community-university partnerships will lead to universities feeling honoured or validated by being approached by the community.

I also learned the importance of broadening my own definition of what community involves, and the importance of not dichotomizing school and community. I came to this study with the intention to not partner with schools. I argued that preservice teachers already had experiences in schools through their practicums, but they also needed to be engaging in environments that lay beyond school-based practicums. It was by default that I included

school-based partners in this research project. Yet some of the richest insights that emerged for me from this study came when considering the intersections of "community" and "school," and how these intersections make it impossible to separate these environments. Preservice teachers need exposure to a variety of places and people as they negotiate their understandings and their identities as emerging teachers—and that exposure needs to be facilitated and contextualized differently.

For example, school-based practicums focus on skills development, but an ESL course in which students partner with isolated immigrant women focuses on building understanding of the culture, the needs, and the strengths of minority language learners. Situating preservice teachers in the community, whether in a school or in an immigrant youth group, as part of a course, enables instructors to contextualize course content and provide opportunities for preservice teachers to construct their understandings of that course content with places and with people. Where preservice teachers end up matters less than the connections they make between course material and their situated experiences. In this study, however, I found the school-based experiences unearthed unexpected negative articulations and understandings. Despite being negative, these understandings were significant and such understandings could provide students, instructors and community members with insight into how we construct meanings around minority language learning. Furthermore, it reminded me that instructors need to facilitate these experiences thoughtfully, helping students to critically reflect on their experiences by providing feedback and class-time to unpack their experiences and the knowledge built from those experiences. I needed to do this better in my own teaching, and

came to these ideas from researching my teaching, as well as including “school” in my definition of “community.”

I hope that the findings of this study will encourage and inspire teacher educators to take up community-engaged teaching and learning, as well as to engage in research on those projects in order to continue to contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education. Furthermore, I hope that institutions of higher education will begin to see the need to provide support and expertise for faculty interested in pursuing community-based teaching and learning, and for community members who would like to share their knowledge as co-educators with universities. For these reasons, I believe that there is a need for community-based teaching and learning networks in order for those of us who are committed to this type of work to come together, share our stories, research our practices and recycle our findings back into the community. I believe that it is within networks such as this that the field of community-based teaching and learning will grow, and emerging areas of research will be supported and inspired.

Chapter 7: Moving Forward

Towards the end of completing this thesis, I started a new job as a curriculum, teaching and learning specialist at Vancouver Island University. I now work at the university's teaching and learning center supporting faculty in their teaching and learning pursuits through a variety of programs. Shortly after starting, I sought out the director of the Institute of Community-based Research (how could I not?), and over coffee one day we discussed the existing compartmentalization of research, teaching and learning, especially in regards to community-based engagement. We questioned why so many institutions, including our own, separated out these three areas. Having worked on this research project, I have experienced the richness that results when teaching, learning, research, and community are brought together. I also knew that some institutions had begun to challenge this dichotomy and were working in innovative ways to provide centralized support for a variety of community engagement opportunities. We became giddy with thoughts about how we might influence and support dynamic opportunities in, and interactions between, teaching, learning, research and community.

Writing this final chapter and coming to this place, I know that I want to continue to work in some capacity to support faculty, community members and students pursue community-based coursework. In undertaking this project, my main institutional support was through the encouragement of my supervisor. There was no one on campus who could connect me to other faculty members who were engaging in the same pedagogy, or review my course outline, or help me develop a rubric, or tap into a database of community partners and pull up a tidy list of those partners' self-identified needs. Having those supports would have helped immensely, and who knows, perhaps even taken me down different paths and into

different research territory. With this in mind, I want to be that support for faculty at my institution. I have the passion, and a bit of experience; I just need the tidy database and some time to grow my own understanding of the culture of the institution, the faculty engaging in this type of work, and the communities we are connected to.

I've also noticed that slowly the word is getting out that I have some expertise in the areas of community-based teaching and learning and action research. Recently, a faculty member contacted me interested in discussing how to design a community-based course for the upcoming term. I was ecstatic. The faculty member was from a completely different discipline than I was familiar with, but I was excited to think of how the principles of community-based course design could be applied to a completely different content area.

We met and discussed the course, the syllabus, the objectives, possible partners, possible projects, and the steps we could take together in building relationships with potential partners. Furthermore, because of conversations I had with the Institute for Community-based Research, I had been made aware of an emerging opportunity, suggested by a community partner, that I believed fit perfectly with this instructor's course and objectives. Given my knowledge of the community-based needs, as well as the knowledge of the faculty and course-related objectives, I was able to suggest a possible opportunity that would bring faculty, students and the community together in a meaningful and relevant project. We also discussed writing about the process in order to continue to contribute to the literature on how to design and implement community-based courses in a variety of disciplines.

In this example, I see myself straddling two worlds. I'm connected to possible community-driven opportunities, and at the same time working closely with faculty to structure

curriculum and design courses. Straddling these worlds allows me to suggest and support opportunities that bridge community needs with teaching and learning objectives. This is the kind of support I want to be, and that I believe institutions will need to have in order to effectively facilitate community engaged teaching and learning.

I am enjoying this new identity. Informed by this journey, as laid out in the pages of this thesis, this new identity is my identity, and the identity I want to revel in. I want to be a person at my institution that supports and encourages faculty interested in designing and implementing community-based courses, or interested in researching their own teaching. I want to receive requests in my inbox asking me to help design community-based courses in a variety of disciplines, or even between disciplines. I want to use the knowledge and skills gained from engaging in this research project and apply them to support and facilitate similar opportunities for others. At the same time, I acknowledge that I am still growing my expertise through theory and practice, and am relatively new to community engagement in higher education. Nonetheless, I hope that I can continue to learn and grow in order to engage in this work. Because I know how powerful it can be.

As I write this final paragraph to conclude this journey, I am looking forward down an emerging professional path and realizing that this is not a concluding paragraph but a mere introduction. Engaging in this research project as I have has only deepened my commitment to community-based learning. That commitment, what has emerged from this research project, and my continued keenness and privilege to work in this area are all guiding me toward more community-based teaching, learning and research. I hope to make a difference in this field, and to faculty and students at my own institution, and most importantly, to members of the

community who have so much to contribute and who honour universities by collaborating and sharing their expertise. I felt the power of this collaboration in conducting this research, and I want to continue to facilitate and build such opportunities for the benefit of all those who are interested in engaging in the powerful, but at times messy, intersections of teaching, research and community engagement.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Scripts

Recruitment Script for Student Participants

Hello everybody. My name is ~, and I'm here today for just the first 10 minutes of class to explain to you a research project that your instructor, Kathleen, is interested in undertaking, and it involves this class. Now that you've had a week of classes, you are aware that this course has a community-based focus and that you will be engaging in a community-based project. If you are planning on participating in that community-based project (as you know you do not have to if you have issues with transportation or time—you can opt to complete a different assignment) you also have the opportunity to participate in a research study related to community-based learning in teacher education programs.

As you know, your instructor, Kathleen, is interested in community-based learning, and how community-based learning can be utilized in teacher education programs—especially in regards to ESL methods classes, like this one. For that reason, she's designed this course and recruited a number of relevant community-based groups to work with you in a community-based project. And she's done this in an attempt to help you connect with ESL learners, their lives, their experiences, their families, and their communities. She believes that by connecting you with the community, outside of the university, you will have a greater understanding of who some of your future students are, and the experiences they have outside of the classroom. She thinks that by doing this you will be more informed and effective teachers. She wants to test out community-based learning, and learn, as a teacher, how effective it is. As teachers, this is what we're always doing. We're always trying out new ideas and lesson plans and units. We reflect on them, decide what works and what needs to change. This is what Kathleen wants to do, but she wants to do it on a formal level—and she wants to write about it and share those results with other professionals in journals and at conferences. She also wants to use this research and these results to write her PhD dissertation. To investigate this style of teaching, community-based learning, in this formal way, and to enable her to write about it—she needs participants—and that's why I'm here.

Most, if not all, of you will participate in the community-based placement. That's great. That's part of the course, and separate from the study. But you also have to option to participate in this study, if you so wish. Basically, by agreeing to participate, you are giving Kathleen the right to photocopy or make electronic copies of your assignments and then when the course is completed and grades are submitted, she will analyze your assignments—check them over, look for themes, see what sort of insights you had about ESL learners before the community-based exercise, and afterwards. And all of the assignments are designed to access this information. Also, if you participate in the study, and sign the consent forms I have with me

today, you also are agreeing to participate in post-course interviews. You will meet with Kathleen, and maybe even other students and community group members here at the university, after the course is completed and grades submitted, and discuss your experiences in the course. The reason why everything is done after the course is completed and grades submitted is so that the research study and the course are kept separate. Kathleen is not allowed to know who is participating until after the course. This is because it could present a conflict of interest. If at any time during the course, she discovers that a certain student is participating in the study, your data will not be allowed to be used after the course is completed. So the only requirement of you beyond the coursework is allowing Kathleen to analyze your assignments after the course is done (remember, she'll photocopy or make electronic copies of your assignments during the course), and agree to perhaps meet for a 1-2 hour interview once the course is completed.

It is important to note that your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Deciding not to participate, or withdrawing your consent at any time will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with Kathleen or me, or with staff of the University of Victoria either now or in the future. For example, Kathleen will never even know that you agreed to participate and withdrew at some point during the semester. You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with Kathleen, or I, The University of Victoria, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. If at any time you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact me at. My email is on the consent form, and you'll have a copy of that.

Your consent will be collected by me, either today, or if you'd like a couple of days to think about it, at the beginning of next class. I'm a departmental colleague of the Kathleen's. I won't have access to any of the data; I'm just being the third-party person to collect consent forms and act as a contact if any issues related to the study should arise during the course. This research study is interesting, and a bit challenging, because Kathleen has a dual-role. She is both the instructor of the course and the researcher. For this reason, we have to make sure that the course and the study are kept as separate as possible. She must not know who is participating or not participating in the study (not the course) as it presents a potential conflict of interest. But many teacher-academics feel that it is important for teachers to be able to study their courses—and to write about them and help contribute to a variety of areas in education. Still, we have an ethical obligation to you to protect you—and for that reason we must keep knowledge of participation as secret until after the course is completed and grades submitted.

This research study is concerned with the ways in which teacher education programs and the pedagogies employed can deepen preservice teachers' understandings of ESL learners and ESL pedagogy. By participating in this study, you will be contributing to the growing area of community-based learning in teacher education. You will be potentially helping other preservice teachers, ESL students, and teacher education programs locally, and perhaps nationally. By participating in this study, you have the power to create and shape understandings of how courses in teacher education programs are structured, and perhaps made more practical and meaningful for future teachers, and ultimately for the students they intend to teach.

In the dissemination of results, organizations will be given pseudonyms. However, it will most likely be necessary to describe participating organizations in order to convey a sense of context to the reader. For this reason, participants, and perhaps others, familiar with such organizations may be able to guess what organization is being described and may also be able to guess the identity of the community-based member who is participating from that organization. If that information can be deduced by readers, they may also be able to deduce the identity of the student participant(s) that partnered with that organization, if they knew the student and the organization with which that student partnered. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to protect the identity of participants in this study.

I'm handing out consent forms now. Please read them over, and if you have any questions you can ask me.

Recruitment Script for Community Participants

(to be done in person, or on the phone by the researcher)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our community-based course, EDCI 457. I am looking forward to working with you.

In addition to being the instructor for this course, I am also a PhD student in the department of curriculum and instruction, and actually I am hoping to study this course, EDCI 457, and this community-based partnership as the basis of my dissertation. I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in that study as well as the course itself.

Basically, the course and the study overlap quite a bit—and there isn't much more that would be required of you if you participate in the study. As a teacher, I am always trying out new ideas, strategies and pedagogies—like community-based learning—and reflecting on how they work, how they could be improved in my own practice. This time, I want to make that process of trying out and reflecting on pedagogy more formalized. I'd like to write about it, in my dissertation and in academic journals, and also present at academic and professional development conferences. To do that, however, I have to have consent from the students and from the community groups that are participating in the course.

If you agree to participate, you agree to let me use data collected from our meetings. I will audiotape our meetings, and transcribe those tapes later—using our interaction as data. Also, I would like for you to keep notes, like a journal, during your experiences in the community-based project—when you work with students—and I'd like to have access to those notes as part of my data. Also, after the course is completed, I would like to meet and have a semi-structured interview with you about your reactions and experiences during the project. I will also audiotape this interview and use the transcription as data. In the literature on community-based learning the community perspective is quite under-represented. For this reason, it's important for me to seek out this perspective and include it in my study in order to inform future educators who are perhaps interested in community-based learning, about the issues and experiences from the community-side, not just the university-side. The time commitment for the research study is expected to be a total of 4-6 hours. You may have to check with your supervisor if you can use your office hours to participate in this study or if you are expected to do it in addition to your other work.

It is important to note that your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Deciding not to participate in the study, or withdrawing your consent at any time, will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with me, the students or with staff of the University of Victoria either now or in the future. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not

affect your relationship with Kathleen, or the University of Victoria, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. If at any time you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact me (kborto@uvic.ca).

Also, you may have to check with other members of your organization if it is alright that you participate in the study. Since you represent not only yourself, but your organization, you will have to get the organization's permission to participate. You will have to sign the consent form that I've sent you—being sure to keep a copy for yourself, and to give me a copy as well.

In the dissemination of results, organizations will be given pseudonyms. However, it will most likely be necessary to describe participating organizations in order to convey a sense of context to the reader. For this reason, participants, and perhaps others, familiar with such organizations may be able to guess what organization is being described and may also be able to guess the identity of the community-based member who is participating from that organization. If that information can be deduced by readers, they may also be able to deduce the identity of the student participant(s) that partnered with that organization, if they knew the student and the organization with which that student partnered. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to protect the identity of participants in this study.

This research study is concerned with the ways in which teacher education programs and the pedagogies employed can deepen preservice teachers' understandings of ESL learners and ESL pedagogy. By participating in this study, you will be contributing to the growing area of community-based learning in teacher education. You will be potentially helping other preservice teachers, ESL students, and teacher education programs locally, and perhaps nationally. By participating in this study, you have the power to create and shape understandings of how courses in teacher education programs are structured, and perhaps made more practical and meaningful for future teachers, and ultimately for the students they intend to teach.

I would like to give you time to consider participating in this study. If you could think it over and get back to me in a week or two, that would be great. Also, if you are interested in participating, we may also have to seek consent from your organization. If you could let me know to whom I could speak regarding that, that would be great. I will also have to explain the study to him/her and provide him/her with a consent form.