

THE HEART OF TEACHING: EXPLORING EMPATHY, GENUINENESS AND POSITIVE
REGARD IN THE ADULT IMMIGRANT ESL CLASSROOM

By

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ABSTRACT

While there is a lot of evidence showing that teachers that are more effective are empathetic, genuine and have positive regard in the classroom, which in turn relates to higher achievement, attendance and perceptions of teacher effectiveness, less is known about the effect of these core conditions within adult immigrant English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms specifically. This qualitative study explored the roles of Carl Rogers' core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard in creating supportive relationships in adult immigrant ESL classrooms. Teacher perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness and positive regard were explored, as well as the way in which adult immigrant ESL teachers implemented these conditions in their classrooms. In addition, this study gathered data on the relationship between the core conditions in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. A review of the related literature was conducted, as well as gathering of data from twelve adult immigrant ESL teachers through focus groups, observations and post-observation interviews. The findings of this study support much of the previous research on the core conditions in education, suggesting that that empathy, genuineness and positive regard are essential in building supportive relationships in the adult, immigrant ESL classroom. The findings also suggest that empathy is the most important, governing condition in building these relationships. The conclusion proposes adult immigrant ESL teachers focus on their development and cultivation of empathy, genuineness and positive regard. In addition, the conclusion proposes that adult immigrant ESL programs and funders support development and cultivation of these conditions and make them a focal point when planning for the future of adult immigrant ESL education.

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DEDICATION

To all of the hardworking adult immigrant ESL teachers out there who are changing lives for the better every day.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Study

This is a qualitative research project with the purpose of exploring the roles that the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard play in creating supportive relationships in adult immigrant English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. These core conditions were first introduced by the American psychologist Carl Rogers (1995) as the basis of the Person-Centred Approach (PCA).

There is a lot of evidence to support the idea that more effective teachers are empathetic, genuine and caring in the classroom (Aspy & Roebuck, 1982; Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2009). To many, this represents the heart of teaching. This study explored how adult immigrant ESL teachers build empathetic, genuine and caring relationships with their students. As there are relatively few studies on this topic in adult education, it is hoped that the data in this study helps to paint a clearer picture of the importance of these conditions for teachers, and that it informs future research and recommendations for teaching in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

Background Information

I would like to start by looking at this area of research from a broader perspective. Is there a larger role for the core conditions in society? “Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world,” claimed Barack Obama in his Morehouse College Commencement speech in 2013 (Rutsch, 2013). During his time in office, Barack Obama often talked about the ‘empathy deficit’ and how it was a pressing problem for America. He delivered many speeches on this topic at charity events, colleges, and in television appearances. He claimed that the ability to see through another’s eyes is the key to addressing many of society’s problems. He called for a sense

of empathy to infuse politics in America. Some would argue that with the 2016 election of Donald Trump, and the Brexit decision in the United Kingdom, that the empathy deficit has become more evident (Rosefield, 2017; Scammell, 2016). Even before these events occurred, there was a rise in anti-immigration sentiment around the globe with many policies and actions indicating less empathetic responses towards immigrants (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Norris, 2005). Levels of empathy may play a pivotal role in many political and societal issues, such as immigration, welfare, gun laws, collaboration between political parties, and international relations. Can the core conditions lay the foundation for creating a more empathetic, compassionate and understanding society? Of course, this study does not answer any of the broader questions related to this topic, but it is important to remember the bigger picture, as a society that is more empathetic, genuine and that has positive regard for each other could potentially have some much larger global implications. This study gave insight into this on a micro-scale, looking at the roles and influence that the core conditions have in a specific segment of society.

The results of this study add to the body of research on how teachers in post-secondary and other adult education programs teach their immigrant populations. This is becoming increasingly important for many countries. In Canada, in 2012 the number of immigrants was 248,732 (Government of Canada, 2016). In comparison, in 2019 Canada will welcome 330,000 immigrants (Government of Canada, 2017). Immigration levels are rising every year, with the target number of total immigrants to Canada in 2020 expected to reach 340,000. This trend is likely to continue as Canada has an aging population and is using immigration to fulfill its workforce needs. In 2015, 15% of Canada's population was 65 years or older, and by 2030 this figure will be 22% (The Future of Higher Education: A Canadian View, 2015), almost one

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quarter of the total population. These retiring baby boomers will need to be supported by a younger, taxpaying workforce, and as birth rates are relatively low, Canada will most likely need to fulfill its labour needs through immigration.

Many of these immigrants will need further education. In Canada, approximately 64% of first generation immigrants attend a postsecondary institution by age 23 (Picot & Hou, 2012). For people aged 25-64 with post-secondary education, the 2006 census shows that 14% of these people are immigrants that have post-secondary education that was completed in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). In addition, in 2017, 40,000 refugees immigrated to Canada, which is one of the highest intakes in Canadian history and the target intake for 2020 is 48,700 (Government of Canada, 2017). Refugees generally have had less education, and less opportunity than other immigrant populations. This means they often need an increased level of education and support, especially in English, in order to integrate into Canadian society and into the workforce.

A key part of integrating immigrants into the labor force is education, and especially language education. Educators need to be able to teach adult immigrants in the most effective and efficient way, taking into account each immigrant's unique history and life circumstances, with socio-cultural education being an essential part of the process. Because of these complexities and the added challenges they bring, the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard may be the key to doing this well.

I have been working in adult immigrant ESL education for approximately ten years. I started as a teacher of adult ESL with international and immigrant students, and for the last six years have moved into an administrative role. As a program manager, I no longer have teaching responsibilities, but I interact with teachers and students every day, and I have been lucky

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enough to observe many teachers. I have observed firsthand how important empathy, genuineness, and positive regard are for teacher-student relationships. I have seen many different types of teachers – from those who appear to struggle to create supportive relationships with their students, to others who thrive in this role. From my informal observations, I have seen that in general, the higher the level of core conditions that the teacher appears to have, the better the relationship is between the teacher and their students. My experience as a program manager in the settlement sector should be considered as an influencing factor in this study, and techniques to address this potential bias are addressed in the Method section.

The demands on newly arrived immigrants are great. They are usually thrown into an environment that is very new to them, and must adapt to a completely different culture, in a very short amount of time. While trying to adapt to the culture, they are also usually trying to manage multiple, competing demands such as improving language skills, finding a job, and supporting their family. There is often little time for learning through socializing or supportive relationships in the community. The ESL classroom is often one of the few places that immigrants have time to connect with other people, and this means the relationship with their teacher becomes very important on a number of levels, and especially for learning language and socio-cultural skills.

Working with immigrant populations, surface behaviours often do not tell the full story. Students may have had highly influential life events that can shape their perspectives. For example, a student may display bullying and intimidating behaviors, as this is what he had to use to survive in a refugee camp, or she may have difficulty trusting teachers because she has had many experiences with people in authority who have severely broken her trust. In addition, many immigrants have experienced trauma. These experiences can affect the individual and on the surface, their behaviors can be mistaken as uncooperative, or unusual and may be dealt with in

inappropriate ways. If teachers are aware of how life events can influence perceptions and perspectives, they are more likely to deal with what may appear to be inappropriate behaviors in more supportive ways. Creating a non-judgmental and understanding environment is central to the purpose of Carl Rogers' PCA, so this approach may play a key role in the ability to look beyond surface behaviors for adult immigrant ESL teachers.

In early 2015, I conducted a small-scale pilot study investigating how supportive relationships are created in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. This was done with a focus group with four adult immigrant ESL teachers, as well as a follow up interview with one of these participants. The focus was predominantly on empathy. The main findings from the pilot study were that in the classroom, empathy, being non-judgmental and sharing personal experiences played an important role in creating supportive relationships between teachers and students. Coded transcripts from the focus group and interviews revealed a few common themes, which are listed in Table 1, on page 150.

This pilot study led to more specific questions about genuineness and positive regard and the need to further explore the role these conditions play in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, thus determining the focus of this particular research study.

General Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Before focusing on the core conditions exclusively, it is beneficial to look at the qualities of effective teaching as a whole in order to gain perspective. There are multiple characteristics of effective teachers and it is challenging to determine which characteristics are most important and how they should be measured. To analyze the characteristics of effective teaching, researchers often look at the way teaching is evaluated by students. There are many aspects of effective teaching that can be measured, such as Learning/Value, Instructor Enthusiasm,

Organization/Clarity, Group Interaction, Individual Rapport, Breadth of Coverage, Examinations/Grading, Assignments/Readings, and Workload/Difficulty (Marsh, Roche, & Fowler, 1997). The core conditions could be considered included in characteristics such as Individual Rapport. Researchers such as Feldman (1997) and Lowen (1996) have identified characteristics of effective teaching that are comparable to the core conditions such as respect for students, teacher concern and communicating positive regard. It is important to remember that there are many characteristics of effective teaching and that this study focuses on one aspect of this broader area of study. The core conditions and the relationship to this broader area is explored further in the literature review.

The Core Conditions

The research on the characteristics of effective teaching indicates that variables such as student-teacher relationships, respect for students, rapport, and communicating positive regard are key parts of effective teaching. The core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard are key parts of these characteristics and there is strong evidence to justify further exploration of these core conditions, which is presented in the literature review. As these core conditions and the Person-Centred Approach (PCA) represent the theoretical framework of this study, in this section, I define these core conditions, and the PCA in detail for a better understanding of these concepts.

The PCA is based on the late Carl Rogers' (1995) approach to psychology. His approach was first applied to counselling contexts, but later was applied to other disciplines, including education. His theories formed much of the basis of humanistic education, which is also referred to as person-centered education. The main idea of Rogers' theory is that all people have an actualizing tendency. In other words, we all have one basic, innate tendency - to grow to meet

our full potential. The PCA outlines three core conditions that need to be present in a relationship to create a climate for growth in an individual. These three conditions apply to all interpersonal relationships, but are especially important to therapists and clients, as well as teachers and students.

It is worthwhile explaining how the PCA fits in with today's approaches to learning, and especially related to the learner-centred model, as it is easily confused with PCA. In recent years, there has been a push toward adopting the learner-centered/student-centred model, with the American Psychological Association's Board of Education Affairs presenting a framework for restructuring schools and for teachers to follow in planning instruction (Cornelius-White, Motschnig-Pitrik, & Lux 2013). It is worth noting that both learner-centred/student-centred education and person-centred education, or PCA, are based on different theories, although they have many similar characteristics. Learner-centred education originated from constructivist learning theory, whereas person-centred education originated from counselling theories and educational psychology (Cornelius-White, 2007). Both approaches place the focus on the student interests first, and move the focus away from more traditional style (i.e., lecturing) to student-directed learning. In both approaches, interpersonal relationships are said to be central. The learner-centred approach focuses on the active learning of the student with the teacher as more of a facilitator rather than the primary source of knowledge, which is more in line with the PCA. As Carl Rogers said, "the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered" (Kraft, 1994, p. 41). The PCA is more broadly focused but applies well to the learner-centered model, which is more specific to the classroom.

I will now turn to defining each of the core conditions. Choosing just three conditions for effective teaching may seem simplistic when considering the complexity of the teaching and

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learning process, but this study is not intended to explore the whole field of effective teaching. My aim is to focus on the core conditions, which are one important aspect of effective teaching. From the explanations below it is evident that each of the three conditions is very complex and each of these conditions has many characteristics. Although an operational definition is not necessary for this qualitative study, to ensure clarity, I refer individually to empathy, genuineness and positive regard and I refer to them as “conditions”. When referring to all three conditions I refer to them just as “the core conditions”.

In this study, empathy, genuineness and positive regard are referred to in two ways: as *conditions* and as *behaviours*. Both aspects are important. As *conditions*, empathy, genuineness and positive regard are perceived more as states, or attitudes. These are underlying dispositions or ways of being. They can be looked at as a latent characteristic that a teacher or therapist may embody on a more conceptual level. In this study, the core conditions are also referred to as *behaviours*. Empathy, genuineness and positive regard are conveyed and expressed in the classroom with certain actions and approaches, and these can be observed and analyzed (Aspy & Roebuck, 1977). This represents the behavioural aspect of the core conditions. I feel it is important to view empathy, genuineness and positive regard as conditions or states, but also in a more practical way as behaviours that convey these conditions, because viewing them in this way is likely to lead to more beneficial data for adult immigrant ESL teachers and other stakeholders.

Below I will define the core conditions and I will add details of what each condition may look like as a behaviour in the classroom, referring mainly to Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) who gave detailed information on this.

Empathy.

One of the three core conditions brought forward by Rogers (1995) is empathy. Empathy has been defined in many different ways, in many fields of research such as neuroscience, social psychology, ethics and business. Although empathy is multidimensional, and this condition has been described using a variety of terms, including empathetic understanding, perspective taking, emotional contagion, and cognitive empathy, in this study I refer to this condition just as empathy. It is important to note that empathy seems to be underexplored in adult education (Kasl & Yorks, 2016), with most work on teacher empathy being limited to Rogers' theories (Feshbach & Feshbach, 2009). To explore definitions of empathy that are most suited to adult education and teaching, I looked at Rogers' theories along with other commonly cited definitions in other research areas. There is quite a lot of disagreement by scholars on how empathy can be defined, but in general, it is agreed that it refers to the ability to understand and sense the feelings that someone is experiencing and communicate this understanding to that person. Most simply, empathy can be described by the metaphor, "standing in someone else's shoes."

I start with Carl Rogers, as his theories create the framework of this study. While Carl Rogers (1995) defined empathy in many ways, he referred to it as a process rather than a state, and as complex, requiring much skill to implement properly. "It means temporarily living in the other's life, moving about in it delicately without judgments; it means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware" (p. 142). For this to occur, Rogers felt that active, sensitive listening was required. Rogers (1975) referred to three dimensions of empathy, explaining that to have empathy a counsellor, and therefore a teacher, one needs to understand the client's world (cognitive), feel the client (affective), and communicate this understanding and feeling with the client (behavioural).

Definitions that are more recent provide further support for the multidimensional definition of empathy. Preston and Hofelich (2012) explained that in empathy research, “After at least a century of discussion.... Most agree upon the existence of multiple overlapping but distinguishable empathic phenomena” (p. 24). Batson (2009) is a social psychologist who has studied empathy extensively, and is especially well known for his research on empathy’s link to altruism. He described eight concepts of empathy, which included knowing another person’s internal state, adopting the posture of another, feeling as another person feels, projecting oneself into another’s situation, imagining how another is feeling, imagining how one would feel in the other’s place, feeling distress at another’s suffering, and feeling for another person who is suffering. While these concepts are arguably subtle in their distinction, Batson claimed that they are all important and have distinct roles. In relation to the functions of empathy, he claimed that the first six concepts are about gathering knowledge on another’s thoughts and feelings, and the last two concepts motivated others to respond sensitively and help others. In this way, I consider looking beyond just defining a concept, but also the functions of empathy. Helping others is ultimately what teachers and students do in the classroom, so this part of Batson’s definition is very relevant to this study.

Decety and Jackson (2004) analysed past literature and determined the three main components of empathy that were broadly agreed upon - an affective response to another person, which often entails sharing that person’s emotional state; a cognitive capacity to take the perspective of the another; and some regulatory mechanisms that keep track of the origins of self- and other-feelings (in order to regulate emotions). This definition is very similar to Roger’s (1975) definition of understanding (cognitive), feeling (affective), and communicating this understanding and feeling (behavioural). Feshbach and Feshbach (2009) built on Roger’s

definitions too, specifically in the field of education. They defined two elements of empathy - the ability to understand and identify another's feelings and perspectives and the ability to communicate that understanding to the individual with whom one is empathizing.

As empathy has been defined in so many ways, it is important to give some parameters on how it is defined for this study. I have decided to follow Feshbach and Feshbach's definition. As I have demonstrated, there is much support for a multidimensional definition of empathy, which is reflected in this definition, concisely. This definition also reflects the importance of multiple aspects of empathy in the classroom. A teacher must not only be able to understand the feelings of a student, but also to be able to interact with the student and communicate this understanding to the student. Part one of the definition refers to cognitive and affective aspects, and part two is more behavioural, so in this way it builds on the definitions of Rogers. In addition, this definition is constructed so that it can easily apply to teachers in the classroom, which lends itself more easily to gathering of data from teachers in this study.

In the classroom, as a teaching behaviour, teachers who are empathetic listen closely, ask clarifying questions, model learning, provide effective feedback without judgment, and encourage other students to understand the lesson and other students better (Cornelius-White and Harbaugh, 2010).

Genuineness.

Another of the three core conditions is genuineness. This condition has been referred to as authenticity, realness, self-awareness and transparency, and Rogers referred to it most often as congruence. In this study, I have chosen to deviate somewhat from Rogers', and refer to it as genuineness, as congruence is a term with many other meanings, which may be confusing for participants in this study. To me, genuineness is the more understandable and accessible way to

describe this condition. Genuineness refers to being real with a person, not having any professional or personal facades or masks, and being self-aware. Rogers (1969) described genuineness in the following way:

I present myself as I *am*, when I come forth non-defensively, without armour, just me. When I can accept the fact that I have many deficiencies, many faults, make lots of mistakes, am often ignorant where I should be knowledgeable, often prejudiced when I should be open-minded, often have feelings that are not justified by the circumstances, then I can be much more real. (p. 228)

Rogers (1969) explained that this genuineness makes it easier to learn, and to get closer to people, as it encourages others to be more real as well. Rogers (1995) has also described genuineness as transparency, saying “The therapist makes himself or herself transparent to the client; the client can see right through what the therapist *is* in the relationship; the client experiences no holding back on the part of the therapist” (p. 115). Here, Rogers has described genuineness in relation to a therapist-client relationship, but the same would apply to a teacher-student relationship.

Both Irving and Dickson (2006) and Lietaer (1984) explained that being “real” means being honest to the client, but also being honest to oneself as the teacher or therapist. Tudor and Worrall (1994) elaborated on this and described four requirements for Roger’s congruence that include what happens inside the teacher, but also how this is communicated to the student. These four requirements were: awareness of the flow of feelings and sensations within one as one works (self-awareness); ability to be and to live these feelings and experiencings (self-awareness

in action); ability and willingness to communicate one's awareness in the immediate moment of our relationship with a client (communication); and that one evolves coherent and ethical criteria for assessing when it may be appropriate to share one's awareness (appropriateness).

A student needs to trust a teacher, and this trust needs to be built on authenticity. For example, a teacher may decide to share personal experiences in the classroom. In this way, the student develops an understanding of the teacher and validates their perceptions of the teacher. This also encourages more openness from the student. This congruence, or genuineness is what Rogers claims increases the potential for growth in the relationship.

As most definitions of this condition tend to agree, in this study, genuineness is defined as it has been described in this section, encapsulating all of these aspects – being authentic, open and honest towards oneself, and towards others. Genuineness is being transparent, self aware, and presenting yourself as you are, with sincerity and without pretense.

In the classroom, as a behaviour, teachers who are genuine are self aware; open; share their feelings and opinions; are willing to learn and admit mistakes; and are authentic in interaction (Cornelius-White and Harbaugh, 2010).

Positive Regard.

The final condition outlined by Rogers (1995) is positive regard. Rogers (1995) also referred to this condition as acceptance, caring, warmth, and most often as unconditional positive regard. Positive regard means that the therapist or teacher is willing to accept all feelings from the client or student, including anger, fear, love, hatred without judgment (Rogers, 1995). The teacher values the student no matter what feeling they express, valuing them for who they are as a person.

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Rogers gave a detailed explanation in 1957 (reproduced in Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990):

It involves as much feeling of acceptance for the client's expression of negative, bad, painful, fearful, defensive, abnormal feelings as for his expression of good, positive, mature, confident, social feelings, as much acceptance of ways in which he is inconsistent as of ways in which he is consistent. It means caring for the client, but not in a possessive way or in such a way as simply to satisfy the therapist's own needs. It means a caring for the client as a separate person, with permission to have his own feelings, his own experiences. (p. 225).

To add to this, Rogers (2013) explained unconditional positive regard by saying when we look at a sunset, no one says:

It needs a little more orange in the cloud cover, a little more pink on the right hand side. You allow it to be. That's one of the joys of sunsets – they're all unique. You allow them to be just what they are. (p.12)

Lietaer (1984) described unconditional positive regard as a multidimensional concept with three dimensions – positive regard, non-directivity and unconditionality. He described positive regard as a warm attitude towards the client (or student), non-directivity as an attitude of respect for individuality, and unconditionality as enduring acceptance of the client (student).

Although Rogers (1995) preferred to call this condition unconditional positive regard (UPR), in this study I use the term positive regard as it has more achievable and realistic connotations, and there have been a number of criticisms of the “unconditional” part of this term. Two of the main problems with the term are the conflict between unconditionality and genuineness, and the improbability of unconditionality for the therapist (or teacher) (Lietaer, 1984). When trying to be completely honest and transparent, it is more realistic to think that a teacher may express non-acceptance in some situations; for example, when someone takes illegal actions. As Lietaer explained, “learning theorists and behaviour therapists tell us it is naïve to believe unconditionality is possible” (p. 45). In addition, both Lietaer (1984) and Irving and Dickson (2006) claimed that UPR could be construed as indifference. As the teacher, or therapist, wants to display acceptance to all attitudes and feelings, it is understandable that this intention could be misconstrued. A more conditional attitude may be more effective in forming a relationship. Unconditionality is best seen as a goal to aim for and good in concept, but in reality it is more difficult to attain. For this reason, and to make it easier for participants in this study to understand the concept, I have chosen to refer to it as positive regard only. In this study, I have still presented the definitions of unconditional positive regard that I have accepted as the basis of positive regard. Positive regard still means being non-judgmental and striving to accept all feelings presented with all people and in all situations. It encompasses all of the aspects of unconditional positive regard that Rogers and other researchers have defined, with the only difference being that the term positive regard accepts that we are human and that unconditionality is not often possible.

As most definitions of positive regard and UPR tend to agree, in this study positive regard is defined as it has been described in this section - it involves going beyond what is often

an initial response towards a person, a judgment related to liking or not liking them, and treating them with warmth and caring at all times. The unconditionality is seen as a goal to aim for, but I have decided it is not included in the term.

In the classroom, as a behaviour, teachers who have positive regard for others laugh with students; trust students; share personal stories; ask for student opinions; show affection for their students; have open body language and smile; move closer to students when asking questions; and acknowledge student responses (Cornelius-White and Harbaugh, 2010).

Inter-relatedness of the core conditions.

The core conditions are multi-dimensional and inter-connected and together may form the basis of many other characteristics of effective teachers. Irving and Dickson (2006) presented a framework for future research of the core conditions that draws upon social psychological models. Their framework presents the core conditions as three mutually interdependent dimensions – cognitive (beliefs and attitudes), affective (feelings and emotion) and behavioural (action based on cognitive and affective dimensions). This study followed these dimensions to analyze the core conditions in adult immigrant ESL teachers. Focus groups and interviews focused more on the cognitive and affective dimensions, while classroom observations gathered data on the behavioural dimension.

One of Irving and Dickson's (2006) recommendations for future research was addressing the relationship between the core conditions with the hope that this would help us gain a better understanding of these processes in practice. This study followed this recommendation by gathering data on this inter-relationship. For example, is empathy the governing trait? This study also gathered some data on the influence of the core conditions on other characteristics. For

example, are characteristics such as trust and respect influenced by the core conditions? Further details of the research questions is outlined below.

Research Questions

Building upon an earlier pilot study, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which supportive relationships between teachers and students are developed in the adult ESL classroom. The primary questions that guide this research are as follows:

1. What are adult immigrant ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard in building supportive relationships with their students?
2. How do adult immigrant ESL teachers implement empathy, genuineness and positive regard in their classrooms?
3. What is the relationship between empathy, genuineness and positive regard in building supportive relationships between adult immigrant ESL teachers and their students?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review was to present significant research studies on the topic of supportive relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and especially focusing on the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard. There has not been a lot of research done in this area, especially when looking at adult immigrant education and the core conditions specifically. Therefore, this literature review was divided in three sections that each focused on a key part of the research questions. The first section focuses on the common characteristics of effective teaching, and how the core conditions fit within this. This included a review of the main quantitative studies on teacher effectiveness measured from student evaluations and meta-analyses. This was done in order to get the overall picture of research related to the core conditions and to present statistical evidence of the importance of these conditions in education. The second section is focused on the core conditions within adults studying in post-secondary environments. The final section examines the core conditions within immigrant education.

The Core Conditions within the Common Characteristics of Effective Teaching

There are multiple characteristics of effective teachers and some discussion of which characteristics are most important and how they should be measured. One way to analyze the characteristics of effective teaching, that is well researched, is to look at the way teaching is evaluated by students. Many universities in North America currently use the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) as a course evaluation tool as its effectiveness has been supported by a lot of empirical evidence (Marsh and Roche, 1997, 2000; Murray, 1983). The SEEQ contains nine factors for students to evaluate teachers: Learning/Value, Instructor

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Enthusiasm, Organization/Clarity, Group Interaction, Individual Rapport, Breadth of Coverage, Examinations/Grading, Assignments/Readings, and Workload/Difficulty. Feldman (1997) defined 28 dimensions of effective college teaching based on research literature on student views on effective teaching, including dimensions such as teacher preparation, clarity, stimulation of interest in course and dimensions that are more related to the core conditions, such as the teacher concern and respect for students. In Feldman's (1997) comparison of these dimensions, he found that dimensions such as teacher preparation and organization of the course, had a stronger correlation with student achievement than a teacher's concern and respect for students. It should be noted that this analysis was based on data from 23 studies in college environments, and not focused on adult ESL learners specifically. Lowman (1996) pared down the characteristics that make exemplary teachers to four dimensions related to how clear, how interesting, how positive and how motivating the teacher was with students. In his 1996 study that involved the analysis of over 500 student nomination letters for teacher awards, he found that the most effective teachers had clear organization, presented in interesting ways, and they could communicate positive regard and motivate students. There is a variety of dimensions to effective teaching and considerable debate over which are the most important. I will now build on the discussion of effective teaching with some focus on syntheses of meta-analyses, meta-analyses and larger scale studies on this topic.

Hattie (2009) conducted a synthesis of meta-analyses based on more than 50,000 studies that measured various influences of students' learning and other educational outcomes. The studies included most school subjects, all ages (early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school and tertiary) and many comparisons such as comparing instructional approaches, teacher

training programs, and expectations placed on students. It should be noted that it did not include any meta-analyses that were specifically focused on English as a second language.

In his analysis of meta-analyses, Hattie (2009) used Cohen's d to calculate effect size, that generally can range from -0.2 to 1.2 with $d = 0.40$ representing an average influence on educational achievement. He recommended using $d = 0.40$ as the hinge-point that we should be aiming for in an educational innovation, arguing that while almost all innovations have some positive effect, judging influences of educational achievement relative to $d = 0.0$ can be misleading. As shown in the example in Figure 1, on page 156, the average effect size of homework on student achievement was $d = 0.29$.

This may be seen as a worthwhile intervention as it is having a positive influence; however, it is below the average effect size of $d = 0.40$, and ranked quite low compared to other educational innovations. Hattie (2009) labelled the area on his barometer above $d = 0.40$ as the "The zone of desired effects" (p.19), as they have the greatest impact on achievement. Although Hattie (2009) felt it was better to set the bar higher, he also cautioned that each influence and result needed to be analysed in its own context, and in accordance with its own nuances.

In his analysis, Hattie (2009) included influences contributed by the teacher that affect student achievement, including teacher training, teacher subject matter knowledge, quality of teaching, professional development, teacher clarity, and student-teacher relationships. He found that student-teacher relationships were $d = 0.72$ on his barometer, placing it amongst the highest ranked influences on student achievement outcomes. He found that positive teacher-student relationships were essential for learning to occur and the quality of the teaching and nature of teacher-student relationship were the most important aspects that the teacher contributes. It should be noted that the findings presented on student-teacher relationships are primarily based

on the meta-analysis of Cornelius-White (2007). These results are expanded upon later. Hattie (2009) also emphasized the importance of all students in the class feeling cared for, explaining that often a teacher's perceptions of how students feel about them are not accurate.

Concerning other aspects of effective teaching, Hattie (2009) also analyzed quality of teaching through comparison of five meta-analyses. The data that was analysed for quality of teaching all came from student evaluations and ratings of teachers at college or university level, although each meta-analysis had a particular focus. Two of the more recent meta-analyses presented were Irving (2004), and Hattie and Clinton (2008). Irving's (2004) meta-analysis focused on student evaluations of secondary school math teachers and found that the highest correlations came from teachers challenging students; high expectations; monitoring and evaluation; and teaching the language, love and details of mathematics. Hattie and Clinton's (2008) study compared teachers who had passed the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, with those who did not pass. They found that the National Board Certified teachers were more likely to challenge students to think. They also found that these teachers had a positive classroom climate, and had respect for their students. This underscores the importance of developing supportive student-teacher relationships, as respect is likely a key part of these results.

Other teacher contributed factors that ranked highly in Hattie's synthesis of meta-analyses included feedback, which was $d = 0.72$ on his barometer, as well as providing formative evaluation, which was $d = 0.90$ on his barometer. It could be argued that the core conditions have an influence on these variables too. If a teacher cares about each student as a person, and demonstrates empathy with them, it sets students up with a basis to accept feedback and therefore learn. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2009) described empathy as a means to

providing accurate, specific feedback. In 2007, Cornelius-White had also explained that empathy gives students valuable feedback to self-assess, and helps learners understand others and content. Learning to understand others is especially important for immigrants, as they are learning a language, but also as they are learning about culture as well.

One of the criticisms of Hattie's work is that it is so broad that it does not offer much in terms of detailed and accurate interpretation of the data, which makes it difficult to compare effects among variables because of the way he grouped the meta-analyses. For example, in his analysis of the meta-analyses, he grouped studies under "teacher subject matter knowledge", and he did not find a strong relationship with student achievement. One of the studies notably omitted from this group was Cohen (1981). In this study, Cohen (1981) looked at teacher ratings, as done by students and found that perceived teaching skill and knowledge of the subject showed the highest correlation ($r = 0.50$). This study was not included in his group, and therefore the analysis of teacher subject-matter knowledge, although it was used in another of Hattie's groups. If it were included in the "teacher subject matter knowledge" group, it surely would have increased the effect size that was presented. It is beneficial to drill down a little further in the studies that Hattie (2009) presented, if we want more accuracy in the results.

Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis was specifically focused on learner-centered teacher-student relationships, and is of significance when evaluating the body of research on empathy, genuineness and positive regard. This meta-analysis included 119 studies from 1948-2004, involving over 350,000 students and 14,000 teachers in six countries. The meta-analysis focused on nine independent variables including empathy, warmth, genuineness, non-directivity, higher order thinking, encouraging learning/challenge and adapting to social differences, and 18 dependent variables including cognitive variables such as achievement, grades/retention, math,

science, IQ, as well as affective variables such as student participation, positive motivation, self-esteem and social connection. Cornelius-White (2007) used Pearson's r , correlation co-efficient to measure effect sizes, so it should be noted that the numbers presented look smaller than those presented earlier in Hattie's (2009) synthesis of meta-analyses. In order to assess or compare between the studies, it is worth mentioning that Fraser et al (1987) found an overall average correlation of $r = 0.20$ for all educational innovations. For this reason, this study explained that any effect size of $r = 0.30$ or higher could be looked at as a medium to large effect size. In the Cornelius White (2007) meta-analysis, some students in higher education were included; however, most participants in the studies were from grade 1-12.

One of the main findings from Cornelius-White (2007) was that educational programs could improve effectiveness by focusing on interpersonal relationships. Teachers with high levels of empathy and warmth (positive regard) were found to have significant positive effects on student outcomes including achievement scores, interpersonal functioning, self-concept, and attendance. The factors that had the highest correlations to many positive student outcomes were trust ($r = 0.35$), empathy ($r = 0.32$), and positive regard, which they called warmth ($r = 0.32$) and a smaller relationship shown for genuineness, which they called congruence ($r = 0.14$). Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) suggested that this lower result may be because genuineness and its effects are more difficult to see and, therefore, measure. It is possible that trust is formed from a basis of empathy, positive regard and genuineness, and Cornelius-White (2007) discussed this, and especially warmth (positive regard) being the first step to building trust and other conditions needed for a facilitative student-teacher relationship. They described trust as having high expectations for student learning and believing in students. They also explained that trust has non-directivity, in which teachers respect and share power with the

students. One would expect that this would be especially important when working with adult immigrants, as they often come with their own experiences and expertise and showing respect and sharing power seems like it would lead to a more positive learning environment. This relationship was explored in this study. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) concluded that while empathy is likely one of the most important contributors to facilitate learning, all of the core conditions are important and are more effective when they are all present and work together to build relationships between students and teachers.

Another significant finding from the Cornelius-White (2007) meta-analysis was how data was collected when measuring person-centred variables. When observer or student perspectives were the source of the measurement, stronger correlations were found than when teachers own views on their behaviour were used.

Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis contained 28 studies from David Aspy and Flora Roebuck (1974, 1977, 1982), so looking at some of their research is the next step as we drill down into the more detailed aspects of the research on the core conditions in education. In the 1970s, Aspy and Roebuck formed the National Consortium for Humanizing Education, which carried out a series of studies on the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard. They conducted a series of studies that included 500 teachers and 10,000 students in rural and urban schools in 42 states and eight foreign countries. They used tools such as Flander's Interaction Analysis (Flanders, 1966), Bloom's taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, Krathwohl, & Masia, 1956) and Carkhuff's Interpersonal Process Scales (Carkhuff, 1969) to assess the role of interpersonal skills and conditions in classrooms. Much of their data collection involved the recording of the teaching of classes and then analysing the audio for verbal behaviour. These recordings were analysed using the previously mentioned tools; for example,

raters had to describe whether a segment of a student-teacher interaction showed empathic response on a scale from 1-5, with each level of the scale having a thorough description of what that level of empathic response would include.

Overall, in their series of studies, Aspy and Roebuck (1982) found the levels of teacher' interpersonal functioning revolving around empathy, genuineness and positive regard, were directly related to student achievement, good attendance, and positive attitudes and behaviour in school. More specifically, they found that the core conditions were positively related to students' I.Q. gains. In addition, they found that most teachers had levels of the core conditions that were below what would be considered enough to facilitate student growth, but could be trained to enhance their levels of interpersonal functioning with benefits being seen in as little as 18 hours of training (Aspy & Roebuck, 1982). This training focus was on interpersonal skills, and involved teachers getting feedback on their classroom interactions through audio recordings of their class, and then participating in a series of training modules such as Accepting Feelings, Accepting Student Ideas, and Questioning Skills.

Aspy and Roebuck's (1977) findings on empathy were also especially significant. They found empathy was the governing trait as teachers with high empathy levels usually displayed positive regard and genuineness as well. Aspy and Roebuck (1977) summed up their research simply by saying, "kids don't learn from people they don't like; but they do learn from people they do like, and people can learn to show kids they like them." (p. 31). While the focus of the Aspy and Roebuck studies was mostly on elementary, junior and senior high schools, their findings may apply to an adult immigrant ESL educational context as well. In comparison, Tudor and Worrall (1994) claimed that genuineness was the most central and fundamental of the three core conditions. They explained that positive regard and acceptance only come after genuinely

allowing oneself to experience and be aware of responses to a client. In the same way, Tudor and Worrall (1994) argue that genuineness is a prerequisite for empathy, as, “it is only as we know ourselves, our experiences and our experiencing that we are able to be fully alongside our client.” (p. 197).

Also in the 1970's, in Germany, Reinhard Tausch and Anne-Marie Tausch (Rogers, Lyon, and Tausch, 2013) found similar results to Aspy and Roebuck when they conducted a series of research projects into person-centred teaching. Tausch and Tausch (Rogers, Lyon, and Tausch, 2013) studied empathy, congruence (genuineness) and warm respect (positive regard) and their effect on learning. They developed a scale to measure these conditions and then from 1975-1978 they applied these scales to recordings from classrooms. They included 6570 students and 291 teachers from all school levels - kindergarten to secondary school (Rogers, Lyon, and Tausch, 2013). They found that there was not a lot of person-centred teaching happening in schools in Germany, with only around 11% of high school and secondary school teachers they studied rating high in all conditions. In another research project, they developed a questionnaire for pupils and rating scales to measure intellectual processes in lessons that they recorded and to assess students' responses to learning activities in the classrooms. They found that when teachers offered high levels of empathy, genuineness and positive regard to their students, there were many benefits to the students including higher motivation and interest in learning as well as fewer feelings of anxiety. The finding on anxiety may be of particular interest to the field of adult immigrant ESL, because there is a significant amount of refugees coming to Canada who have experienced trauma previously, and this is a huge barrier to learning. Reducing stress and anxiety in the classroom could be a step forward in supporting these particular individuals. In addition, it was found that levels of the core conditions were not related to class size, years of

teaching experience, or academic teaching skills, and that teachers could learn to offer high levels of these conditions through training in university courses and encounter groups (Rogers, Lyon and Tausch, 2013).

In sum, these meta-analyses and larger scale studies provide consistent evidence that teacher empathy, genuineness, and positive regard are strongly related to many positive student outcomes, including achievement. These studies mostly focused on younger students, so further research is required to determine if these results are similar in adult immigrant ESL students.

The Core Conditions within Post-Secondary Education

Here I present studies that explore the teacher's role in an adult student's experience in the classroom. This includes studies that focus on colleges or universities. Often these types of institutions administer ESL for adult immigrants. Within this research area, although there are few studies that focus specifically on the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard, there are some studies that focus on comparable characteristics of adult student-teacher relationships such as authenticity, rapport, interaction and belonging. These studies have been organized under the core conditions they relate to, although it should be recognized that some studies are associated with more than one core condition.

General Core Conditions.

Hill (2014) collected graduate student perspectives on effective teaching in a graduate course over an eight-year period. There were 107 participants, with 29% having some teaching experience. The study was qualitative, with data being collected through group discussions in the class gathering participants' ideas on the characteristics of effective teachers. Participants made lists after their discussions, and then refined the lists based on what others had said previously. The results showed that the affective processes in adult learning and the student-teacher

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relationship are equally important as the presentation of content and the methods used to present content. Being approachable, having empathy, having compassion, and caring for students were frequently mentioned as important characteristics.

While the core conditions appear to be important within adult classrooms, one could argue that the core conditions become even more important in health care disciplines as students are expected to exhibit the same core conditions when working in this field. Tang, Chou and Chiang (2005) studied nursing students and their perceptions of effective and ineffective teachers. They interviewed 214 nursing students from two nursing schools and found that the attitudes of teachers towards their students determined effective or ineffective teachers rather than their professional abilities. Similarly, Kendrick, Simmons, Richards, and Roberge (1993) looked at medical residents' perceptions of their teachers. They found that the instructor's empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and their facilitative behaviors were all associated with positive student perceptions of the education they received.

In the technology field, Motschnig-Pitrik and Standl's (2013) work is based on the work of Carl Rogers and person-centered learning. They argue that this framework is enhanced with web 2.0 technology, especially concerning increased motivation, community building and improved inter-personal relationships. For motivation, they surveyed 131 students in a Web Engineering course and found that instructors with high levels of the core conditions (empathy, genuineness, positive regard) increased student motivation. They also surveyed 28 students who had completed the Organizational Development or Project Management Soft Skills courses, which were taught in a person-centered way. They found that with the majority of these students, the person-centered teaching approach had positive effects on their interpersonal relationships. This sheds some light on the influence of technology on student-teacher relationships in the adult

classroom. The methods are not discussed in detail in this study and leave some questions unanswered; for example, can the results of the surveys be attributed to person-centered attributes of the teaching, or could they be attributed simply to the course content?

Empathy, Genuineness and Positive Regard.

If teachers are empathetic, have positive regard, and are genuine, does this then influence students to be this way too? Does this help in creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom? The following studies focus on one aspect of empathy with adult students - perspective taking. Perspective-taking is often described as the cognitive dimension of empathy, and empathy has often been found to stem from perspective taking (Batson, Early and Salvarani, 1997). The following studies present evidence of perspective taking/empathy and its benefits in the adult classroom:

Toi and Batson (1982) conducted an experiment with 84 psychology students at the University of Kansas that provided evidence that perspective taking of someone in need leads to an increased willingness for altruistic helping of that person. Richardson, Green and Lago (1998) conducted an experiment with 130 undergraduate students and discovered that perspective-taking enhances nonaggressive responses in situations where people may normally respond aggressively. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) conducted experiments with 85 undergraduate students that concluded that there was evidence that perspective-taking diminished the expression and accessibility of negative stereotyping of others.

Over a span of nine years, Sass (1989) asked 700 of his Educational Psychology students about two recent classes - one in which they had high motivation and one in which they had low motivation. Common characteristics were recorded for each, and rapport was consistently one of the characteristics related to high motivation. Students described good rapport as when teachers

were perceived as approachable and friendly, seemed interested in the students and their learning and knew their students well. These abilities - for a teacher to know their students well and to be friendly towards them – are closely related to the core conditions of empathy and positive regard.

Frisby and Martin (2010) also studied instructor-student rapport, recruiting 233 undergraduate communication students, who reported on their perceptions of classroom relationships, and especially their relationship with their teachers and how it affected their participation and learning. They found that when students felt a good rapport with their teacher, they felt stronger connections to the class, participated more, and learned more in the class. Frisby and Martin (2010) acknowledged that some research minimizes the role that the instructor takes in learning (Fassinger, 1997; Wambach, & Brothen 1997), but argue that their findings add further support to the impact of the teacher, and the teacher's responsibility for the classroom environment (Hattie, 2009; Goldstein & Benassi, 1994). Frisby and Martin (2010) claim that the exact teacher behaviours that lead to good rapport with students are still unknown; however, it is worth noting that there have been some studies such as Murray (1983) which have outlined several teaching behaviours that establish rapport, and other factors that influence rapport, such as ensuring students are paying attention.

Cranton and Carusetta (2004) worked with 22 faculty members from three Canadian Universities over three years to understand what constituted authentic teaching and how participants were displaying authenticity in their teaching. Authenticity included self-awareness, awareness of others, context, leading a critical life, and relationships. Using grounded theory through interviews, observations and focus groups they found that by far the most common theme was teachers' relationships with their students. They concluded that a person who understands him/herself well is more likely to be genuine in the classroom and be passionate

about teaching. They also concluded that a person who has a good awareness of others as human beings is more likely to understand student's needs, and a person who is more aware of student-teacher relationships is more likely to care for students and to be concerned with their learning. It is interesting to compare this view of authenticity with genuineness and empathy explored in this study, as there are many similarities. Genuineness and authenticity have the same characteristics, and may both stem from self-awareness. Self-awareness and awareness of others may have an influence on one's ability to empathize.

Freeman, Anderman & Jensen (2007) examined how a college freshman's sense of belonging impacted students at the classroom and campus level. They surveyed 238 freshmen at a public university. They found student perceptions of instructor warmth and openness had an association with sense of belonging in the classroom. Creating a sense of belonging when working with adult immigrants may be particularly important due to the students not only being new to the class, but being new to the country as well.

The Core Conditions within Immigrant Classrooms

Very few studies that have focused on the classroom experience of adult immigrants in English language classes. I present some studies here that offer insight into immigrants or racial minorities and their classroom experience. Most of these studies focus on adults, with one focused on teachers of culturally diverse classrooms in elementary and middle schools. Although the core conditions may be important in all adult education classrooms, they ought to be especially important in adult immigrant classrooms. Immigrants do have a set of shared concerns, situations and other commonalities that come from moving to a new country. They often require support in adjusting to a new culture and dealing with experiences that may require a more caring approach in the classroom.

It should be noted that classifying immigrants together could be problematic. As Swaminathan and Alfred (2001) said in reference to adult education, it does not make sense to assume everyone that is older than 25 is one homogenous entity, and it is the same when referring to immigrant education - there are significant differences between immigrant groups, and we should not devalue their diverse contexts and experiences they bring with them. Having said that, there are definitely some shared challenges that immigrants face, that justify grouping them together, as they have all moved to a new country and culture, and usually have to learn and adapt to a new language and culture.

Magro (2009) interviewed ten English teachers who worked with children and adults who were newcomers from war-affected countries. She asked the teachers to reflect on their experiences teaching newcomers, which included barriers that were experienced, their understanding of the learning process, and best practices for teaching strategies for these learners. Although the study was not focused on the core conditions specifically, many of the teachers identified the core conditions exactly when they said that effective teaching involved being “empathetic, authentic and caring” (p. 87). Some of the teachers expanded on this, saying, “A good EAL teacher is one who can get into the skin of that student” (p. 87) and “The teacher should be connecting with the human being first and foremost, the content is secondary” (p. 88). These kinds of findings reinforce the importance of the core conditions in teaching immigrants, and the fact that these core conditions, and the building of healthy student-teacher relationships is just as important to adult immigrants as it is to immigrant children.

Although more focused on high school students than adults, Davidson’s (1996) three-year longitudinal study of adolescent racial minorities found that the relationships students have with people in authority, including teachers, could have a large influence on student experience.

Davidson (1996) found that distant or depersonalized relationships with teachers and other sources of authority could silence students and lead to alienation, especially if students felt that there is different treatment based on ethnic or racial group. Swaminathan and Alfred's (2001) research in higher education also found that immigrant students could have silent periods in the class, as the students try to understand an environment that may be very different from what they are used to, and try to find a way to fit into this new classroom culture. Swaminathan and Alfred (2001) suggest that the teacher's handling of the classroom dynamic is important, and that teachers can create a negative learning environment if they ignore an immigrant student's culture and language. Alfred (2005) argued that the assumptions that teachers have of students influence interactions between them and their students, and that often these assumptions result in behaviours that unintentionally create marginality for immigrant students, and therefore have negative effects on learning. Davidson (1996) concluded that the development of relationships between students and people in authority (such as teachers) is an important factor in creating a successful learning environment.

Along the same lines, McAllister and Irvine (2002) did a qualitative study of 34 elementary and middle school teachers who were teaching culturally diverse classrooms, and self-selected to take part in a multicultural professional development seminar and found that all teachers in the study believed that empathy was important when working with diverse students. The teachers expressed that "empathy was an implicit part of being a caring, supportive and responsive teacher" (p. 442).

These studies highlight the importance of the student-teacher relationship in immigrant classrooms, and the importance of understanding and acceptance of diversity for student learning. I would expect that with adult immigrant ESL students any differential treatment based

on ethnic or racial group could be detrimental to the environment of the class, as the trust in the teacher could be lost. In most research studies, trust between teachers and students is paramount in building a healthy relationship. Does the trust in the teacher come from their ability to be genuine, empathetic, and to have positive regard? In this study, there was some focus on this question with teachers.

Proposed Research

This literature review explored research on the core conditions and supportive student-teacher relationships. It started with a focus on the common characteristics of effective teaching, and how the core conditions fit in with some of the other characteristics that have been studied in relation to effective teaching. There was a particular focus on large meta-analyses and large scale studies. The literature review went on to include smaller studies including research with a post-secondary focus. Research on the core conditions in education was supplemented with research from some other discipline areas. In addition, there were some studies that focused on the students' and their ability to use the core conditions, which can offer some insight into what a teacher needs to do in the classroom. Finally, there were some studies presented that focus on immigrants in education specifically.

The results of the meta-analyses and larger scale studies reviewed clearly suggest teacher empathy, genuineness and positive regard are related to many positive student outcomes, including achievement. While it is clear that the core conditions are strongly interrelated and work together, the research appears to be less clear on which of the core conditions is most influential on the other core conditions or student outcomes.

Many of the previous studies focused on younger students in elementary and high school, and very few on adults, and even less on adult immigrant ESL learners. The dearth of studies in

this area provides strong rationale for conducting this study. With increases in immigration in Canada, there is an increasing need for research to improve education for immigrants. This is not only important for the immigrants themselves, in order for them to succeed in reaching their goals more quickly, but also important for the federal and provincial governments who fund settlement education programs for immigrants. If the education provided to immigrants is more effective and efficient, it will lead to faster integration in which immigrants can become productive contributors to Canadian society. This study contributed by offering some more insight into this area, in the hope that it leads to further interest and research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Research Design

This study explored the ways in which supportive relationships between teachers and students are created in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, especially focusing on the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard. Because this study aims to gather rich, detailed information directly from the experiences and perspectives of adult immigrant ESL teachers, in a way that allows teachers to openly express their thoughts, a phenomenological approach was chosen. This approach was chosen over others because of the focus on the phenomenon of supportive relationships in adult immigrant ESL classrooms and how teachers create these. In doing this, I did not start with a well-formed hypothesis, but rather focused on participants' perspectives to provide insight. Focus groups, observations and interviews of adult immigrant ESL teachers were conducted to collect sufficient data, and prominent themes from this data were analyzed. Although observation was included, I do not see this as an ethnographic approach, as I focused primarily on the opinions and experiences that the participants express in their focus groups and interviews, rather than a total immersion in the participants' environments. The ethnographic approach is shaped by cultural anthropology (Creswell, 2012), and this does not seem to match the context and purpose of this study. Regarding the research questions and how they guide the research, a mixture of approaches was taken. Initially the intention was for the research questions to be used as a loose guide for the focus groups. Although it could not be classified as a pure "ground up", the intention was for the approach to be more inductive in order to allow more accuracy, and a truer representation of what participants were experiencing. In the end, after the first focus group was conducted, due to

limits on time and resources, it was decided that the approach would become a little more deductive in order to gather more specific data related to the research questions. More details on this are explained below in the focus group section.

Participant Selection

The recruitment process intended for this study was a phone call and email to the Program Directors of three large adult immigrant ESL programs in Winnipeg. A copy of the email can be seen in Appendix A. The directors were asked to forward a recruitment email to all teachers in their programs giving information about the study. Teachers were able to volunteer to participate and were asked to respond to the researcher directly. This email can be seen in Appendix B.

For two of the programs, this intended process was followed, and seven participants were recruited. Unfortunately, for the other chosen program, unexpectedly there was another level of approval that needed to be gained prior to the study being approved in the program. This led to some long delays, and due to time constraints, in the end it was decided that alternative recruitment strategies would need to be used to recruit participants in lieu of this program. At a local meeting of directors of adult immigrant ESL programs, the researcher requested help finding participants, and through this event potential participants were contacted, and two participants were recruited. In addition, for focus group participation only, three recently retired adult immigrant ESL teachers known to the researcher were contacted directly for participation. In the end, twelve participants were recruited from a pool of approximately 40 teachers. Participants were selected with a range of ages, genders, levels of education, years of teaching experience, and range of experience teaching different levels. More detailed data on participants can be seen in Table 2, on page 152.

Prior to participation, the researcher gave participants more detailed information about the nature of the study and the processes that would take place. From the focus groups three participants were chosen to be observed and interviewed based on their responses in the focus group and the richness of the data related to the research questions. Pseudonyms are used for all participants and programs names in order to keep participant identities confidential.

Participants were fully informed of all aspects of the study that they participated in and needed to give formal consent before participation in this study. An example of a consent form to can be seen in Appendix C. Participants in the focus groups were also asked to sign a Confidentiality Pledge. This can be seen in Appendix D.

A research assistant helped with the focus groups and observations. The research assistant was asked to sign an oath of confidentiality, which can be seen in Appendix E. Approval from the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board was confirmed before commencing data collection and fieldwork.

Site Descriptions

In this study, focus group participants were teachers, or recently retired teachers in four adult immigrant ESL service providing organizations which I have labelled program A, B, C, and D. Program A was a community-based language training and settlement service provider that had approximately 26 ESL classes for immigrants that ranged from literacy to CLB 6 (pre-beginner to intermediate). The second program, Program B, was a post-secondary institution with approximately 17 ESL classes for immigrants that ranged from literacy to CLB 5 (pre-beginner to low intermediate). The third program, Program C, was an ESL program specializing in blended and online language training with approximately nine classes ranging from level 6 to 8. Program D was another post-secondary institution that had approximately 48 classes for adult

immigrant ESL students that ranged from CLB 3-8 (high beginner to high intermediate). The federal government department of Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada funded three of the programs directly, and one indirectly via a sub contract. Observations and interviews were conducted in two of the four sites. It was decided that it was important to gather data from more than one educational environment, as the institutional environment could have an influence on the overall results.

Data Collection

Focus Groups.

Krueger (1994) and Stewart & Shamdasani (1990) suggested focus groups of 6-12 participants. I conducted two focus groups with six participants in each group. The aim of smaller numbers in each group was to allow for more detailed data from each participant. Focus groups included a mix of participants from different sites in order to generate freer discussion from participants. For the focus groups, I arranged to meet at a time and location that was convenient for all participants. The focus groups took approximately 90 minutes and were conducted during October-November, 2018. The focus group discussions were audio-recorded.

The questions in the focus group started broadly and then become more specific, focusing on how teachers build supportive relationships with their students and the role that the core conditions play in this process. Here are three examples of the questions that were asked:

1. “What does a supportive relationship between a teacher and student look like to you?”
2. “How does your empathy influence your students?”
3. “What are the barriers to the use of the core conditions in your classroom?”

A full copy of the second focus group protocol can be seen in Appendix F. After

completion of the focus groups, the recordings were transcribed, and coded to identify the common themes.

The first focus group was conducted in October 2018. This focus group had six participants. Questions were read to participants and facilitation of the conversation was minimal, meaning it was more inductive, and often the conversation veered to other topics. Although there was still quite a lot of data collected from this focus group related to the research questions, in such a short time frame, and with limited data sets, the concern was that there may not be enough data collected in order to answer the research questions. Because of this, for the second focus group some of the procedures were adjusted slightly to be more specific to the core conditions, making it more deductive. The second focus group was conducted in November 2018. Participants were given a handout at the start of the focus group with the questions that would be discussed, participants were given a short time to write down responses to each question before each was discussed, and the facilitation was a little firmer. This allowed participants to stay more on topic. In addition, a research assistant was present in the second focus group in order to help with the recording of the audio, and keeping the conversation on track. This research assistant was an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research.

In the end, although there were slight differences in the process between the two focus groups, the data gathered was rich in both, with the same questions and topics being discussed in both groups.

Observations.

After the focus groups, three classroom observations were conducted each for 90 minutes. These were done in the classrooms of each of the teachers selected from the focus

groups. The three teachers observed were selected based on their responses in the focus groups and the richness of the data related to the research questions. The three teachers were Bob, Sarah and Carl. Each observation was in a class of approximately 15-20 adult immigrant ESL students, but each observation was quite different. Sarah's class was a Canadian Benchmark Level 3-4 class, meaning students were learning at around the high beginner level. Her class was in a community program that offers childcare. As the class was observed, we could hear babies crying, and children playing in nearby rooms. There were many mothers in the class, with just one male student. Many of the women wore hijabs, but there looked to be a range of cultures in the class. The atmosphere felt very much like a family, and Sarah taught with a lot of calmness, and patience. Bob's class was a Canadian Benchmark Level 5 class, meaning students were learning at around the low intermediate level. The class felt very organized, and professional, with posters on the walls explaining classroom rules, phrases to use in the classroom, and a notice explaining the way in which cell phones could be used appropriately in the classroom. The class looked to be quite culturally diverse too. Carl's class was a Canadian Benchmark Level 4-5 class, meaning students were learning at around the high beginner-low intermediate level. The class felt very organized too. Music was playing in the classroom as the students socialized before the class started. There was a lot of humor used in the class. The class also looked very culturally diverse.

It was decided that observations were to be included in this study because studies such as Cornelius-White (2007) and Bishop, Berryman and Richardson (2002) presented evidence that relying just on teacher self reporting may limit the accuracy of the data. In this study, focus groups and interviews allowed in-depth analysis of teacher perspectives on the core conditions, but these were in conjunction with classroom observations. In addition, this method followed

Irving and Dickson's (2006) framework for future research of the core conditions. The classroom observations were aimed at validating what was found in the interviews and focus groups, to determine whether the beliefs, feelings and emotions found in the discussions were reflected in participants' actions and behaviours in the classroom.

During observations, video and audio was not recorded. A research assistant was present in all three observations in order to help with field notes and observations. This research assistant was an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research.

The researcher and research assistant took field notes during observations and special attention was paid to the behavioural aspects of the core conditions displayed by the teacher. Rough notes were taken during the observations and then after each observation, the researcher and research assistant met to compare and collate notes. The field notes were coded and common themes were identified.

The hope for the observation was for it to be conducted in a class that would be considered typical for the teacher. To confirm this, each teacher was asked how they felt about the class observed and whether it was a typical class. All participants indicated that the class observed was typical.

Although they are not the focus of the observation, prior to each observation, the teacher of the class read a script provided by the researcher explaining the researcher's presence in the class and the reasons for the observation. A simplified version of the script was made for lower language levels. A copy of these scripts can be seen in Appendix G.

Each student gave formal written consent before each observation occurred. A copy of the consent form for students can be seen in Appendix H.

Interviews.

The interviews were conducted after the observations with the same three participants who were observed. The aim of the interviews was to dig deeper into the focus group responses, asking for specific examples, and prompting for further information as well as exploring themes and questions raised in the classroom observations, and to verify what was observed. The interviews took approximately 60 minutes. The specific focus of the questions in the interviews was determined by the themes and sub-themes identified in the focus groups and observations. Here are three examples of the questions that were asked:

1. “Here are some themes that seemed to have emerged from the focus group (show themes). Do you have any further comments, or would you like to add more detail to these?”
2. “We saw the following strategies/activities/processes used in the classroom in order to build supportive relationships with your students. Can you walk me through some of these in detail?”
3. “Is there one core condition that is more important than the others?”

A full copy of an interview script can be seen in Appendix I.

The audio from each interview was recorded, and transcribed. Interview transcripts were coded for themes and sub-themes themes.

Role of the Researcher

My experience as a program manager of an adult immigrant ESL program in the settlement sector should be considered an influencing factor in this study, as well as my personal belief in the values of empathy, genuineness and positive regard. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there were three participants in the second focus group that I knew personally, as I had

worked with them in the past. In this study, in order to counteract possible bias, I adopted five strategies. Firstly, I gathered data in three different ways – through focus groups, observations and interviews so that data on the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of the core conditions could be collected and verified in different contexts. Secondly, I had a research assistant that took independent field notes in each of the classroom observations. This research assistant was an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research. Thirdly, for all of the focus groups and interviews, the research assistant also independently reviewed the data to verify the codes and themes in the transcripts. The research assistant was sent a blank copy of each transcript and coded a sample of 20% of the data to identify themes. I then looked at this coding and incorporated and adjusted my themes and coding accordingly. Fourthly, I conducted member checks on all transcripts. This was done by emailing a copy of each transcription to the participant/s involved, including a short summary of the main themes that were identified through coding. I then asked the participant to verify the accuracy of the transcript, as well as offering comments and feedback on the main themes that were identified. A few revisions were suggested, and these changes were made before themes were finalized. Finally, no classroom teachers who work regularly with the researcher or research assistant were recruited, in order to avoid the possibility of a working relationship influencing participants.

Data Analysis

All audio recordings from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed and the researcher and research assistant read the transcripts and developed coding categories based on common, re-occurring patterns in the data. As the focus groups and interviews included questions about supportive relationships and the core conditions, this data was predominant, but

all data associated to the research questions was coded. Once all data from the focus groups and interviews was gathered and coded, these coded categories were analyzed and organized into themes and sub-themes. Categories that appeared to be foundational, were labelled as themes. Categories that appeared to be secondary branches of other related foundational categories were labelled as sub-themes.

The themes from the focus groups determined more specific themes to focus on in the observations and interviews. For the classroom observations, field notes were taken by the researcher and research assistant who compared and collated these notes. The field notes were coded and common themes and sub-themes were identified using the same technique as explained above.

The following sections present the findings and conclusions based on the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the data from the focus groups, observations and interviews is presented and described, and some links to literature are made. More detailed discussion related to the findings is presented in following chapter. As stated earlier, the primary questions that guide this research, and therefore the presentation and analysis of the data, are as follows:

1. What are adult immigrant ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard in building supportive relationships with their students?
2. How do adult immigrant ESL teachers implement empathy, genuineness and positive regard in their classrooms?

3. What is the relationship between empathy, genuineness and positive regard in building supportive relationships between adult immigrant ESL teachers and their students?

As these questions are the primary focus of this study, findings are presented under sections related to each of these research questions. There were many themes identified that were related to the research questions. Table 3, on page 154, shows a summary of these themes and sub-themes.

As this is a qualitative research study, focusing on depth and richness of data, it should be noted that the data collected is intended to give deeper insight into the core conditions and their use by adult immigrant ESL teachers, show detail that could not be achieved with a quantitative study alone, and possibly bring to light areas that should be explored in further study. For that reason, I have included many quotations from participants to explain themes and bring them to life.

I start with participant demographics in order to give context to all of the data.

Participant Demographics

There were twelve participants that volunteered to participate in this study. They participated in focus groups, observations and interviews that occurred in October - December 2018. All twelve participants participated in a focus group, and three participants were also observed in their classrooms and participated in post-observation interviews. All participants were teachers of adult immigrant ESL students. Table 2, on page 152, shows demographic data for each of the participants.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect privacy. Approximately 85% of the participants were female, and 15% male, which seems to be quite reflective of the adult immigrant ESL sector. Age of participants was quite diverse, ranging from a teacher in her 20s to a teacher in her 70's. Participants had a range of years of teaching experience too, three participants with 1-4 years of experience, six participants with 5-20 years of experience, and three participants with more than 21 years of teaching experience. Concerning education, ten participants had bachelor's degrees, and two participants had master's degrees. There was also a range of language levels that the participants had taught, with four participants with predominant experience at Canadian Language Benchmark stage 1 (beginner to low intermediate learners), and eight participants with predominant experience at stage 2 (intermediate to advanced learners).

Of the three participants who were observed and interviewed, two were male, and one female. Two participants were in their 30s and one in her 50s. Two of the participants had 5-10 years of teaching experience, and one had 16-20 years of experience. Two of these participants had experience predominantly teaching stage 2 and one had predominant experience teaching stage 1. All three participants had bachelor degrees. The classes that were observed ranged from Canadian Language Benchmark 3-5 (high beginner to low intermediate).

Research Question 1: What are adult immigrant ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard in building supportive relationships with their students?

As the aim is to explore teacher's perceptions, this data was gathered from the focus groups and interviews conducted within this study.

Empathy.

Theme 1. Understanding the unique challenges immigrants face

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Many participants talked about the unique challenges and situations that their students face because they are immigrants. Bob explained:

Listening to them and doing little extra things... can be so meaningful for them,... if you can help them writing an email to their landlord or something, you can spend five minutes on that, I think it's really important to them and builds a relationship.

There are many factors that make the adult immigrant ESL student situation unique, and according to teachers in this study, this means empathy from teachers is essential:

If you're a person who didn't have any empathy for the kinds of things that students... go through you would... have some relationship breakdowns when people have a sick kid and need to miss four days in a row...if you didn't respond empathetically to that, that would be damaging to relationships. (Bob)

Another participant emphasized this further:

You have to be a person that can say I'm not surprised you feel crazy. I'm not surprised you're upset. Not everybody can do that. There's some people who jump in and give advice or jump in and challenge or dismiss or blame. I think it's not an easy thing to be empathic. And, I think it's really important for immigrants that you do show you understand because I think when they come they feel nobody understands because how can you. How can you know? (Beth)

Barbara explained how important empathy is and how she sees other perspectives, “I always think about myself being there, using their shoes. I keep thinking would I be happy being there, doing these activities? How would I feel if I had to move to China for example?”

Another empathetic response was from Carl who said:

If I use examples, particularly with relationships, it's not always a family relationship because perhaps ... they're separated from their family. I don't want them to be triggered in my class because of that.

Sub-Theme 1.1 Understanding trauma and past events.

Immigrant students, especially refugee students also often come from situations where they have experienced trauma and hardship. Vanessa expressed this when she said:

There are a lot of students with trauma ... and so when we talk about things like who is in your family and then they think about [their dead family in Africa] and they don't even know the word dead and they are having so much trouble.”

Participants expressed that empathy was especially important for adult immigrant ESL students because of this. Participants also felt that it was important to have a good understanding of current or past events that immigrants had been through. For example, Beth said:

I also think it's important to be well informed. If you know what is going on in the Congo and hear this person has emerged with another chance you have to respect them and I'm not saying you should express sympathy but you have to know what they've been through.

This understanding may be an important source of empathy for teachers.

Sub-Theme 1.2 Learning a new culture, language and hierarchy.

Many teachers felt it was important to support their adult immigrant ESL students with learning about culture, and in this case Canadian culture. The main idea expressed by participants was that it was important to teach their students about Canadian culture, but also to give them the choice of what they would like to adopt or agree with. As Carl expressed:

That's really at the core of what I'm doing...making sure that I see things from both perspectives because you do want them to be able to function within Canadian culture, but at the same time you don't want to take that away from them if they are from which ever country they are from.

Sarah explained why she felt it was so important to teach her students about Canadian culture:

I lived in Asia for...years and my biggest disaster, most horrible moments were cultural. I didn't know... So I bring that experience to them. I want them to know, again you don't have to like it, but just know it.

Furthermore, Sarah added, *“I want to train them in English but also to Canada because of my experiences. I feel we are an unusual country in how we communicate. It takes time to learn how that goes.”* The challenges with Canadian cultural communication were also discussed by Bob, who used modelling to help students with this:

You're kind of demoing Canadian workplace culture because they're in school but I'm at work so if they see me talk to my colleague in the hallway they might pay attention to that. We have an educational assistant now and if they see me interact with her when she's in the room they might look to that as how Canadian speak to each other at work.

Many teachers felt it was important to respect the culture of the student, giving them choice in what they agree with or adopt concerning Canadian culture and honouring and retaining their cultural background. Teachers expressed that it was often a difficult balance of teaching about culture in the new country, and acknowledging the culture of the country where students came from. As Sarah said, *“I always tell my students you don't have to like this, you don't have to agree, just know.”* Carl agreed with this, saying, *“it's also important for me to make sure that students don't feel like I'm trying to take away their culture or their identity,”* and later explaining:

I want them to remember that Canada is a place where so many people from different cultures have come and it's not just a recent thing. It's in so many centuries and so on. I don't ever want them to feel like they have to subscribe to a certain thing.... Everyone's got [a] different perspective. Everyone has this different way of doing things. As long as

it doesn't hurt anybody or hurt themselves then I think they should be free to continue with those things.

In this situation, empathy seems to play an important role in understanding different perspectives.

Sarah explained some of the challenges in learning a new culture and language, *"I want to train them in English but also to Canada because of my experiences. I feel we are an unusual country in how we communicate. It takes time to learn how that goes."*

Cultural differences can be in all areas, and an understanding of what the student perspective is crucial. For example, Michelle explained the differences in the education system that many immigrants face:

Such a different idea of teaching too, the concept of calling... the teacher by their first name and not having a final exam, ... that kind of thing. So, you support them along the way at each interval, at each test, at each time that they have to speak for something. It's really different here in Canada for most of them I think.

In addition, teachers are often required to have an acceptance and empathy for cultural differences and immigrant students who may not understand Canadian cultural circumstances. For example, one female participant explained that when she tells her students she is married to a woman it is often hard for her students to understand:

They immediately kind of recoil and they don't understand and I say, "you are upset, that's okay because in your country it's very bad for woman and woman together, very bad, very scary. But here in Canada is it safe, ... I am still your teacher and you are still my student. I still love you just the same knowing that you don't like it." (Vanessa)

This response in itself shows a large amount of empathy, understanding for students, and positive regard. Being able to overlook what could be perceived as offensive, and empathize with students, even with something so personal to the teacher herself. Overlooking or accepting cultural or religious values that may be in contrast to values that the teacher holds themselves was a common thread with participants in this study.

Other challenges for adult immigrant ESL students includes their change in status, when starting life in a new country, especially if they no longer have the job or standing that they may have had previously:

You're also dealing with somebody who might have been really somebody in his country and here [Canada] he is behind a desk and he's getting things wrong... a doctor comes at 46 and its really hard to learn the language. (Beth)

Sub-Theme 1.3 Being a mother figure.

The role that teachers take on can also be unique when teaching adult immigrant ESL students. For example, some participants talked about taking on a mothering role, which requires an empathetic approach:

I have a lot of students who are pregnant or who have young babies..., they are here and they come from cultures in which they live with their mother and their mother-in-law and their aunts and uncles and all of these women who are with them and suddenly they have nobody. So there really is sort of ... a maternal kind of thing too... I'm not prepared to deny it when it's needed because I think it's too important for them. So even though I feel sometimes that that might be a barrier that I'm not entirely comfortable crossing,This is a need and I can fulfill it. (Mary)

This is also highlighted in something Beth said, *"Immigrant students are so adrift and I cannot tell you how often people have said you're like my mom to me. You know because their mom is there [country they came from] or somewhere, right."*

This emphasizes again how important the teacher role is for adult immigrant ESL students, and how they are seeking a caring, supportive relationship. *"They are in a place where they don't know where they are..., who these people are, and [if they] can trust them. You are the bridge in a way. (Beth)"*

The relationship between the teacher and adult immigrant ESL student seems like it is often closer to a counsellor or support worker role, in which empathy is a key condition, especially to keep the door open for support from the teacher:

There's times where people need to be able to tell you something, not that you're their counselor, but you know it's like weighing heavy on their mind and they seem to let it out. So, you understand why they're checking their phone or why they've got their head down

or why they missed two days of school and your reaction is going to determine a lot for them, including whether they would tell you something the next time. (Bob)

Sub-Theme 1.4 Going above and beyond.

It is worth mentioning that a few teachers talked about helping students with the unique challenges that they face, and in ways that seemed to go above and beyond their teaching roles, and could be seen as altruistic.

For example, Bob explained that he did extra things for students, such as writing an email for their landlord. Grace talked about visiting with students that come back after they have left the program. Vicky shared a story about researching university admissions information for a student who was having trouble. She also shared this story in which she helped a student:

One student, as an example, wanted to help her husband to pass the IELTS test and I said...I saw several books in [] Library. [The student said] "I don't know how to find [them]." So, I went to the library. I took pictures from the entrance and then texted those pictures to the student so she navigated herself... I was going to the library anyways, so I just did it.

Theme 2. Developing understanding from personal experience

It is interesting to note that many participants talked about developing understanding of their students' situations because of personal experiences. For example, Beth was an immigrant herself and would express this to her students to show empathy:

As an immigrant myself I understand a lot of the things that they have gone through and I will point that out and just say I know how hard it is. I know how brave you have to be to come here and often I would share experiences of my own to show that we have a common [experience], just being human and being an immigrant.

Sarah used her past experience learning language to understand what her students were going through, *“I studied French in Montreal as an adult. So, I have that little feeling of trying to communicate as an adult. I’m really glad I went through that experience. It’s quite something, quite difficult.”*

Vicky had a negative experience in school:

Back in my childhood, how I remember my class, I was so afraid to talk, to go to the white board, to ask or raise my hand and I [would] never get a paper back and look at the mark. Many students were just crying literally all recess...all eleven years were just one big trauma for me.

In university, in a different country, she had a more positive experience, *“It really struck me how the teachers were so different and everybody wanted to participate” (Vicky)*. She used this to create an atmosphere in her class, *“where students can feel not only safe, but sort of loved and accepted.” (Vicky)*

Theme 3. The effect of empathy on learning.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that participants also talked about the effect that empathy has on learning. Grace explained how being empathetic led to increased participation by students, *“I think they do share more of themselves in class if other people show empathy.”* Beth explained that the opposite is also true, *“As opposed to them shutting up because there’s no point in saying it.”*

Heather talked about the effect of empathy on learning in a broader sense:

Stress obviously affects learning negatively. We know that. It’s actually a physiological response, like to manage self control or memory or reasoning... if you can lower stress levels by being empathic or empathetic... I think that makes a huge difference to the result of learning.

Stress can hamper memory and affect learning performance (Vogel and Schwabe, 2016), although the evidence on how stress affects learning overall is not conclusive. The results here related to empathy and its effect on learning in general, do align with past research such as Cornelius-White (2007).

Positive Regard.

Theme 4. Being non-judgmental and accepting.

Being accepting and non-judgmental was central to many of the teachers’ approaches when teaching adult immigrant ESL students. Vanessa explained her teaching philosophy as *“really approachable and where students can feel not only safe, but sort of loved and accepted. It’s difficult to put into words, but I can feel it. You want to project those feelings.”* Sarah

explained her non-judgmental approach by saying *“I tell them not wrong or right, but different.... You’re not wrong, you’re not right, different.”*

Many teachers talked about looking beyond surface behaviors that may be negative, and accepting people even if their behaviour was sometimes challenging. Beth explained this well:

When they have issues, I just understand them. So when I do understand the issues I don’t focus on negatives such as people showing up late. I wouldn’t make a comment on that. Sometimes I would even ignore [and] not even record it because I understand what they are dealing with.

Beth expanded on this by explaining the importance of being patient too and non-judgmental, *“be patient, respectful, kind at all times in the class and if someone’s bugging you, you probably don’t understand exactly what’s happening deep down because they are going through so much stuff.”* According to Bob, it does not seem important to always find out what is below the surface and causing the troublesome behaviours. The unconditionality of positive regard was reflected in his comments in which he explained how he gives students with troublesome behaviours the benefit of the doubt and expects that they are going through something difficult:

I’m thinking about the two people who bugged me the most in the last several years of teaching and there wasn’t ever a moment where I figured out okay that’s why this person is this way... There’s got to be something because...everyone has experiences and life stories that influence the way that they are.

One participant explained how years of teaching experience had allowed him to be less judgmental. We were discussing his approach to two students talking in the class:

For me, it's important to make sure not to take things so personally... I'm not taking things as personally as I used to. You know had this been early on in my career I probably would have ... [been] a little more stern, but letting go of that and sort of accepting that students will talk. It's just sort of a natural thing for students regardless of the culture, regardless of who they are and just kind of letting that go. And, that has made my teaching experience a lot less stressful too.

Of course, there is always a balance though. Teachers have a responsibility to manage the classroom, and some expectations on behaviour have to be upheld. Some teachers commented on the difficulty of finding this balance. Sarah gave an example about asking students to not use cell phones in the classroom:

So I'll try with empathy, if they try excellent. If they don't try, then we talk again about it... The remarkable thing is they all try now.... So I don't want to judge them, but I want them to know we have to try.

This focus on the positive and acceptance also extends very much to the challenges of language learning. Bob explained his approach to this:

Always being constructive and never negative towards anyone and being as patient as possible, even if they ask you a question, a very simple question about the thing you just spent two whole weeks on, don't ever make them feel like it's silly or stupid.

Veronica also talked about this:

You want to genuinely help them and let them know you genuinely want to help them which is being accessible, flexible and of course, being positive. They want to grow, especially in their language so, of course, there are all kinds of corrections, but... someone who pronounces something badly, they [don't] pronounce everything badly. You look at the positive and what they call in Toastmasters, growth points and that's what I use - growth points.

It seems that for the participants in this study, it is very important for adult immigrant ESL teachers to be non-judgmental and accepting of their students in order for their students to feel supported in their learning.

Theme 5. Being kind, warm and caring.

The other behavior related to positive regard that were prevalent in the focus groups, observations and interviews was being kind, warm and caring to students. Participants all felt that this was very important as an adult immigrant ESL teacher. As Beth explained, *"For me I need students to know that I really care about them and because I care I'm focused on what they need."* Vanessa said something similar concerning kindness, *"I make sure that my students know that we are safe and we are kind and we try. Those three things, we always make sure we do*

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those three things.” Later she expanded on this, explaining what happens if a teacher is not caring, “I think it’s important for the students who are having a hard time because if they think I don’t care about them, then they wouldn’t really care about me, about the school, they get distant and they start closing off.”

The importance of a teacher caring about a student may be even more essential for adult immigrant students. As Beth said:

I think it’s really important for their self esteem that you like them because when they arrive they are nobody. That is the sense you have when you can’t get a job, your qualifications are not recognized, nobody knows anything about who you are...I think it’s really important that one person really seems to like you and not just one person... you’re important as a teacher... if you show that you like them, they have the sense that somebody knows their worth and when you arrive nobody does.

One teacher, Barbara, went as far as to say that she felt her students should feel love in her class, *“I want my students to feel love in class... I thought my students would learn... being relaxed, being loved and I tell my students... often, I love you. I’m here because I love to do this. I am here as your friend.”*

To counter this though, other teachers did express the need for boundaries. For example, Sarah said:

I've seen other teachers go above and beyond or what I feel is too close and I don't feel comfortable with that. I still need the teacher role, but with that distance of I'm not your friend, it's not love. I wouldn't call it love. I don't need that to teach.

Sub-Theme 5.1 Encouragement and affirmations.

Many participants felt it was important to encourage their adult immigrant ESL students. This encouragement can be linked to the condition of positive regard. For example, Michelle showed an understanding of the immigrant student perspective when she said, *"It's just encouraging them because it does take a lot of effort to come to school most days and just being there."*

Beth showed that encouragement is also linked to knowing and understanding your students and seeing their strengths when she said:

Know their strengths and their issues and when I know their strengths, I'm going to use that in the classroom. So, if I know someone is a forester, often the issue will come up about global warming or whatever, calling him and point[ing] out what he has the expertise in... and you can see that it is really good for people to be recognized for what they have achieved.

Some teachers talked about the importance of building confidence in their students. Here Vicky explains where she got her focus on helping students meet their goals:

I found that some students do not believe in themselves. They have so many doubts and once I walked into [the] classroom and I saw [a] sign that said, dreams can become your reality,... and I went, nice and so...I took this phrase.

Encouragement seems especially important at lower language levels. Michelle felt this was important and Mary too. As Mary explained, *“I’ve also taught foundations and the job is simply, yes you can. You can do it, encouraging.”*

Theme 6. Creating a feeling of safety.

Another theme was safety. Safety refers to a feeling of comfort in the class, knowing that there is no danger or risk of harm. In this case, for adult immigrant students sometimes this does mean feeling that there is no risk of physical harm. For example, Vanessa said:

Some students...back in their countries...are used to their teachers, from when they were children, maybe smacking them. They are physically safe and I will be firm, but kind. I will always be kind and they are not in danger and [I encourage them to] try... because my students can be very afraid of mistakes.

More teachers talked about emotional safety though, and the importance of helping students feel comfortable to participate, to share ideas, or make mistakes. This feeling of safety was expressed by teachers as being an essential part of learning. As Grace said, *“my main philosophy is to just help people feel comfortable in class so that they want to learn and will learn. Everything I do I just try to help people feel comfortable.”* Sarah also pointed out, *“it is important to feel safe in a classroom. They are human, making mistakes and cultural identity*

building and because without that I find it's difficult to learn without being safe. That's what I believe."

Once again, the need for safety was perceived as even more important for immigrant students. As Sarah explained:

In the classroom again I want them to feel that they are comfortable and that they can try to have their voice too, because again...in my experience, [in] many cultures students don't have a voice and here sharing opinion is really important.

Some of the teachers also drew on their own negative personal experiences in learning in order to create a safer environment for their students. Vicky shared her story:

Back in my childhood,... I remember my class. I was so afraid to talk, to go to the white board, to ask or raise my hand and I never would get a paper back and look at the mark. Many students were just crying literally all recess and it was [so] traumatic, like all eleven years were just one big trauma for me...when I went to the University it was sort of different...my philosophy comes from those wonderful teachers and my father ...so really approachable and where students can feel not only safe, but sort of loved and accepted.

This highlights again the importance of empathy as it shows how empathizing with students can lead to a safer classroom for students. As well as empathy, safety may be related to many other conditions such as trust, respect, empathy, genuineness and positive regard.

Sub-Theme 6.1 Supporting students with making mistakes.

Related to safety and positive regard is a sub-theme related to supporting students with making mistakes. This is about how teachers approach feedback and error correction in the classroom. Many teachers commented on the importance of supporting students with making mistakes. Maybe this was seen as especially important because the participants are teaching language and there are many opportunities each class for a student to make obvious mistakes, and for this to be evident for others in the classroom.

All teachers approached mistakes in a positive manner, even to the point of celebrating them in the classroom:

I tell my students I want you to make mistakes, that's all I want you to do is make mistakes and then we talk about why and talk about the gift and on assessments if they make a mistake, I say that's your gift from this assessment. (Sarah)

When you talk about giving them permission to make mistakes, I would often say I am so glad and I don't say who did it, but I'm so glad this person made this mistake because...most of you have a problem with this...so I'm glad you made the mistake, we can talk about it. (Beth)

Sarah explained further why she celebrates mistakes:

Because that's where great learning can actually happen...that's why I want to encourage them. I thank people for making mistakes, which may be so counter intuitive

for them but I just want them to see make mistakes. I studied French as an adult, it's so hard as an adult. You don't want to make mistakes, you're shy... in my experience anyway.

Here you can see that once again, teachers also reflected on their own experiences in order to formulate their approach to when students made mistakes. In another example, Barbara talked about her own experience learning English, *"I was scared of making mistakes and I never felt really comfortable because I thought that my pronunciation was bad...I forgot many things and that environment was very threatening for me."*

All teachers focused on being positive with error correction. As Bob said,

Always being constructive and never negative towards anyone and being as patient as possible, even if they ask you a question, a very simple question about the thing you just spent two whole weeks on, don't ever make them feel like it's silly or stupid.

Of course, the aim for all teachers seemed to be minimizing or eliminating the shame involved in making mistakes. Beth talked about how she did this:

When people make errors I never identify the person who has made the error. So, if I wrote a list of errors that had been made, I would never say [who], so they feel absolutely safe. They know it. It is usually an error that everybody is making.

Many teachers downplay the shame in mistakes by modelling for the students. Vanessa shared a story in which she tried to write some Arabic on the board and showed her students how difficult this was for her, which led to a better understanding for them: *“So, I write slowly in Arabic, you write slowly in English, right, we learn slowly and I think that empathy piece... was so big for them and it kind of got them to realize like oh there is no shame.”*

Carl also shared his thoughts on this:

We lead by example. So putting yourselves out there by taking risks in another language and showing students that you make mistakes too and so it's fine if they make mistakes and to be as enthusiastic about what they can do... I think that really gets students to relax and not to be so hard on themselves.

As can be seen in the examples above, this theme is also related to empathy as teachers talked about empathizing about how it feels to make mistakes. Positive regard also seems to play an important role in error correction, with all participants explaining the importance of a positive approach when students make mistakes. For example, Sarah explained:

I tell them I want you to make mistakes, please make mistakes. When I first come out with that they are quite puzzled, but then we go on to talk about why... because that's where great learning can actually happen... I thank people for making mistakes, which may be so counter intuitive for them but I just want them to see...I studied French as an adult -

it's so hard as an adult. You don't want to make mistakes, you're shy...in my experience anyway. So, I want mistakes.

Participants did seem to agree that a positive approach to error correction and making mistakes is an important part of creating a safe environment in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

Sub-Theme 6.2 Inclusivity

Another theme related to positive regard was inclusivity. Here some teachers talked about all students being included and feeling part of the class group. It may be considered as related to positive regard as it shows kindness, warmth and caring. As Vanessa put it, “*you try and include everybody in your class. You don't want anybody on the outskirts or afraid.*” Some teachers talked about teaching to a variety of cultures and people and how it was important to be inclusive within this. Carl expressed how it is important for him:

[I] take an intersectional approach...to be sensitive to people's cultural backgrounds whether they are introverts, extroverts, shy or outgoing. I try to do a variety of activities to cater to all those things....That seems to make students feel that they are included and that they are heard and that they feel empowered in that way that they can still be themselves.

For many teachers it was again a case of setting up a culture of inclusion within the classroom. An example of this was when Sarah was asked in her post-observation interview how

she felt about her class, *“they are very cohesive, helpful, kind group. That is very important for me, no man left behind sort of attitude and help each other.”*

Theme 7. The effect of positive regard on learning

Many teachers also commented on positive regard and how it affects learning. For example, Bob said, *“I think it puts people at ease and makes them feel comfortable and that’s a great position to be in for learning.”* This aligns with findings of previous research such as Motschnig-Pitrik and Standl (2013), Cornelius-White (2007), and Aspy and Roebuck (1982). Bob expanded on this, explaining:

Everyone needs more confidence when they're learning something new and being negative about someone's mistake isn't going to do them any favors. So I think if you look at what's good and point out something they can do to build on that it's a better strategy than being negative when someone isn't achieving because I think that doesn't really give people the right kind of motivation to do better.

Grace also explained:

My positive regard really means that they’re getting the better part of me and my personality, and that means that I would want to work harder for them..., so I guess that would result in them being more interested in class and more engaged.

Genuineness.

Theme 8. Opening up – sharing oneself.

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This theme is about opening up – the teacher sharing their personal life, experiences and opinions. Much of the data on this theme was summarized in this quote from Carl when he was asked about genuineness in his post-observation interview:

I think it makes them more comfortable to approach me knowing that there's a person, ... a real human being, just like them, ... behind this teacher exterior because I know a lot of them are coming [from] cultures where the teacher is very high up in regard to what they are but I want to show them that with the culture that they're in right now your boss wants a bit of a closer relationship with you in that way, a little bit more casual. And of course there's still some boundaries there, ... I wouldn't tell them other personal things but... making it okay for them to approach me because I know that, in my experience of teachers, it was very hard to see them as regular humans that you can approach. But little bits here and there - telling them my personal preferences and the thoughts and opinions, ... really does open them up to asking questions, even if they think it's a silly question... they know that I am genuine about the advice or the information that I'll give them.

Here Carl talks about being authentic, being accessible, and how sharing personal information can help with this. Mutual sharing seems to benefit both teacher and student. As Bob said “*sharing personal experiences is an opportunity to be genuine with someone.*” As Sarah put it, “*I really think as students sense disingenuous behavior... for me, it's not fair. I mean if I'm asking this (genuineness) from students, I want them to be able to have fairness back. Does that make sense?*”

This idea of fairness to students was also commented on by Mary *“You don’t ever ask them to do what you won’t do.”*

Sarah talked about acting as a caregiver to her parents, how that had affected her personally and how this had naturally affected her teaching, *“a personal experience of what’s going on in our life, I think plays a huge role. You can’t shut that off. There is no way.”* As expressed here, there may be some difficulty in not being sharing personal information anyway. There were many teachers who expressed their comfort in sharing personal information in the class. Barbara was one of them. She explained,

As soon as I started to teach I told everything about my life so they know everything, not everything, but lots of things..., because if I want them to tell me about their things so they can learn English and talk about their families and dreams, so I should do the same. I have no problems in sharing things.

Beth also seemed comfortable in sharing personal information with her students. She explained that she talked to her class about her son, who has a disability, and his successes. *“I think that exposes you and it makes people feel that you’re human and that everybody shares the experience of being human”.*

As well as sharing about their personal lives and experiences, quite a few teachers talked about sharing opinions on different topics and the importance of this. Bob and Beth both explained that they have shared her opinions on some more contentious issues such as support for gay marriage or legalization of marijuana. It seems these opinions were not only intended to

be for opening up the class, but also as a form of modelling, and way of teaching immigrant students about Canadian culture.

Sometimes I feel like I'm the only one in the room who has a certain perspective and I try..., without shaming anyone who shared an opposite perspective, tell them what I think and what I consider that the average Canadian probably thinks, which might not be the same thing.

Some other teachers were hesitant to share personal opinions on controversial issues.

Heather explained her reason why:

Giving your opinion on a hot topic... for me, isn't the definition of genuineness... because I think it can divide people... I'm just more hesitant about actual personal opinions and I don't associate them with being genuine. So that's where I differ a little bit on that.

Apart from the sharing of opinions on controversial topics, all participants agreed that some personal disclosure and opening up to the class were beneficial for their classes. Bob summarized this well:

It's different when you're more open in class. If someone wants to let you in on something that's happening in their life, you know they're really distracted the last few days and

they want to tell you why, I think you're more likely to get that kind of connection if you're also sharing about yourself.

Sub-Theme 8.1 More experience leads to being more genuine.

Related to opening up and sharing oneself, many teachers talked about becoming more genuine as they became more experienced teachers. For example, Michelle explained:

In my first couple of years of teaching I don't think I was very genuine. I tried to be, but I had a script that I followed or my lesson plan and I taught it and they learned stuff, I know they did, but was I genuine? I just don't think I could relax enough at that point. Towards the end of my teaching career, I think I was. I think I had my lesson plan and if it kind of veered off in a different direction I was comfortable with that and if they had a question of whatever kind then I would be able to answer that. So, I think that with more experience and as time went on that I could become more genuine and relaxed...I think it affected the students and they could see me enjoying teaching and so they could relax and enjoy learning

Heather expressed similar sentiments:

When I was starting out as a teacher when you knew me in the classroom, I think I was probably dishonest as a person. There wasn't a genuineness at all, it was a show and I saw teaching as a show and I [had] to get through my plan and it was a very controlled situation.

Maybe this relaxation in the classroom, that allows teachers to be more themselves, more genuine, comes from teaching experience, or it comes from life experience in general. Here is Bob's perspective:

I think I was more guarded in the beginning and I mean in nine years you also grow up a lot and change as a person and I think as a person I'm more of an open person now and in the classroom much more because I think I didn't bring very much of myself in the first years. I was also quite nervous sometimes being in class. If there was a student who I thought didn't like the class or who I just found to be an intimidating person I would feel nervous being in the class. Whereas these days I never do and it's easier to be. So I feel like I'm much more open and present and I bring more of myself into the class....I think it allows you to get to know people better and the more you open up, the more they will open up.

Personality may also play a role. As Bob explained:

I can think of friends of mine who were probably in the first month (of teaching) be...disclosing more about themselves right away because some people are just naturally big self disclosers.... They meet a new person and they're telling them their life story right away and those people get to know others really easily and quickly.

Sub-Theme 8.2 Admitting flaws.

Another aspect of sharing oneself and being genuine was teachers admitting flaws. This was seen by many teachers as being important, especially when learning a language and encouraging students to have a positive attitude towards making mistakes. For example, Heather explained that it was important as a teacher to admit you do not have all of the answers and that you make mistakes:

I do prefer to go with the flow and definitely admit flaws...I think that's important for adult ESL learners...because you're not going to open up with the perfectionist at the front of the room...You're giving that message by how you present yourself and I think by presenting yourself as a flawed, error fraught human being it also opens up that conversation, that ability to make a mistake.... That's how you learn.

Beth, explained that she too admits she has flaws, and talked about her use of humor to aid with this too, *"I use self-deprecating humor and if I do something completely ridiculous that I know they'll think is funny, I will tell them about myself. I'm not perfect...they come ready to laugh at me and at themselves."*

Theme 9. Creating friend-like relationships/reducing hierarchy

Another theme related to genuineness was about reducing hierarchy in the teacher student relationship. As Sarah said, *"I'm human behind this whole teacher thing, right?"* Part of being genuine is not to have any professional or personal facades or masks, and there was a lot of data in this study related to this. Teachers seemed to feel that they needed more friend-like relationship with their students, rather than a traditional, hierarchical teacher student relationship, especially because the students are adults themselves. This may be especially important for

immigrant students, as many come from educational systems where hierarchy between teachers and students is more pronounced. Sarah explained this further, *“some of their countries have such strong power distances, hierarchy structures and have really bad experiences in yelling.”*

Veronica talked about this too: *“When they (immigrant students) first start with me, they are blown away. They are still calling me Miss Veronica, Teacher Sir, ...and I’m saying just call me Veronica.”* Michelle also commented on this, explaining how a more friend-like relationship is challenging for some students at first, but can be beneficial overall:

When I tell my students my name is Michelle they will look at me cross-eyed because no you’re a teacher and some continue with that, but then there are a few that will say okay, Michelle and it just breaks down that barrier and they are more able to ask questions or feel more comfortable. Then you can support them more because you have a more personal relationship.

Another teacher, Vicky, who is an immigrant herself, talked about her first experience in an education system where teachers had a more friend-like relationship with students:

He (teacher) was a musician and he was singing and he gave us the invitation cards for his concert and we went to the concert and then he had a band. I was so shocked, this is my teacher, so it was different. It just blew my mind.

This highlights the differences in educational systems for many immigrants.

Many teachers saw a more friend-like relationship as being more respectful to adult students. Heather expressed this, *“I don’t like the hierarchy with adults. Seeing them for who they are really as opposed to seeing them as your student. Don’t dumb it down.”* With adult immigrant students that have lower language levels, teachers felt it was important to highlight that that students needed to be treated as adults. As Michelle explained what she felt was important, *“I taught low levels and they knew they were the lowest level in the school - to never talk down to them or teach down them, to treat them as adults, no matter how nervous they were about using any of the English that they knew.”*

Heather also talked about friendship in the classroom and how this teaching approach has developed, *“what a supportive relationship between a teacher a student looks like to me is over time a friendship and I think that’s very different from the model that I had in school.”* Barbara added to this, explaining, *“I started reading more about psychology of education and other things that affect people. I started incorporating that in my class that I wanted to be seen as a friend.”*

These findings align with Sass (1989) who found that teachers who were approachable and friendly were consistently related to high student motivation.

Here Heather thought through the idea of friendship in the classroom and possibly coming to the conclusion that it may not have the characteristics of a true friendship:

It’s that concept of connection that is required for friendship. So yeah different levels of friendship perhaps... friends help and support each other but I’m just thinking that through because a lot of the things seem to be about how we, as teachers, are helping and supporting. Is there that reciprocity that exists in friendship? It’s required in friendship.

Sub-Theme 9.1 Maintaining professional boundaries

Although there were many teachers advocating for a friend-like relationship, it is worth mentioning that many teachers also mentioned the importance of having boundaries and not becoming so friendly that some professional boundaries are lost. As Sarah said,

I don't want a big distance. There has to be some distance though. They are not my friends. I don't phone them. We don't hang out, none of that.... So to create that safeness again, I mean I'm the teacher, but I try not to use that often. I'll often say I'm the tallest instead of saying I'm the teacher.

Barbara also commented on the boundaries with friendship in the classroom, *"I know that I'm not supposed to tell students here in Canada that I'm...their friend, but I can't help it."*

Vanessa added to this, explaining that it was okay for her to be friendly, but she did not feel that it was good to be a friend:

We are very friendly toward one another, but they wouldn't call me their friend. They would call me their teacher, but they know it's a very friendly environment and they feel it's very warm because they have a good time, they are always laughing.

Carl also commented on the boundaries to the relationships he has with his students how this had developed over time:

I think the one thing that sort of might have changed a little bit, in terms of my relationship with students, is knowing what the boundaries are with them. So, you know things like not disclosing that I'm on Facebook or social media, limiting excess ability outside of the program.

Teachers overall felt that reducing the hierarchy between teachers and students by treating students with respect, and having a more genuine, friend-like relationship made students feel more comfortable and open to share in the class.

Other Themes.

There was one theme that was identified in this study that do not relate as readily to the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard, but are worth including, as there was enough data to make it significant.

Theme 10. Being student-centred.

Another theme that some teachers talked about is being student-centred. This refers a pedagogical approach that is more focused on the student than the teacher. It takes into account students interests and needs and promotes development of learner autonomy.

An example of this is when Sarah explained her teaching approach:

I kind of don't want to get in the way of, I [don't want] to ... be center stage. I want to be on the side and let them take responsibility so I ask them a lot what do you think ... I don't want to be the center teacher, I want them to help each other...because that is independent thinking and self-motivation.

Veronica had a similar approach that also includes using the expertise of the students:

I like to start where they are, ...where's their starting point and what's their end point, if they happen to know, ... to break it into smaller steps and also to learn from them and to acknowledge their information expertise and share it with the next group of students.

Bob also explained his approach, which included an understanding of the needs of the students, “*You need to teach what they need to know and be ready to change really quickly.*” Beth echoed the importance of having an understanding of the students’ needs, “*I have to take time to find out who I am dealing with. Who each individual is and so that I can know who they are.*” Although not explored deeply in this study, in finding out the students’ needs, it is possible that teachers are taking a step towards identifying student perspectives that may lead to empathy.

Research Question 2. How do adult immigrant ESL teachers implement empathy, genuineness and positive regard in their classrooms?

As the aim is to explore the core conditions and how teachers implement behaviours related to the core conditions, this data was primarily gathered from classroom observations conducted within this study but also from what the participants talked about in the focus groups and through the post-observation interviews. Please note that not all themes identified in the previous section are commented on in this section, just the themes where there was observable behavior and significant amounts of this behavior.

Empathy.

Theme 11. Empathetic classroom behaviours

Expressions of empathy was once a prominent theme in the observations and post-observation interviews. Overall, the observations support what the results indicated in the focus groups – that empathy is crucial in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. As Mary expressed in a focus group *“I think that empathy and building empathy [is important] in all the class, but also just the individual teacher to one student empathy is the building block of community and I think it’s particularly important.”*

Empathetic behaviours were observed in all classroom observations. For example, in Carl’s class, a student was hesitant to come to the front of the classroom to do a role-play. Carl said to the student empathetically, *“That’s okay, we’ll take our time and I can help you.”* Another student expressed in a discussion that he did not like loud music at parties, and Carl said empathetically, *“Ah yes, loud music makes you stressed.”* In Bob’s class, Bob sat down to talk to a student about a book she was using to study English. Bob had asked to look through it to analyze the language in the book, and had explained that some words were not used in Canada. This was an action that did not need to be done in his instructor role necessarily, but appeared to be an altruistic action driven by empathy for the student’s situation. Also in Bob’s class one student was talking about working from 8AM to 9PM in their previous country, and Bob responded by saying, *“Wow, 13 hours,”* acknowledging in his voice that he had empathy for the working situation. In Sarah’s class, she explaining some instructions to the class and noticed a student was anxious to start writing down some information on the board, so she said, *“just two more minutes, and then you write, okay my dear.”* Another example from Sarah’s class was when a student was having trouble understanding the difference between verb types, and she said, *“it’s tricky, isn’t it?”* There were many more examples, of seemingly small empathetic behaviours that may be influential all the same.

When asked about these behaviours in the post-observation interviews Sarah and Carl agreed that these behaviours were empathetic. Carl said,

You know I feel like I pick up on people's energy and body language very quickly..., knowing my own experience with learning a language it's not just like learn everything in one or two hours and then... stop. I think it is important to check in because it's exhausting to be operating in a different language. And I always try to see things from student's perspectives too.

Bob was not as sure as he seemed to think it was just part of his duties, *"it seems like part of the job because I'm getting paid for that time you know..., is that empathy? I guess so."*

However, later in the interview, we did talk about the importance of empathy for his students.

I think empathy is really important and even just in the last month there's been a few students in my class who've been going through stuff and they're away from school and it's not easy and it's really important to be empathetic there.

Sub-Theme 11.1 Listening actively

One of the key empathetic classroom behaviours that was observed in the classroom observations, and that many participants talked about in the interviews and focus groups was listening. All teachers that were observed listened to their students in the class as they gave answers to questions, asked questions, or shared ideas and opinions. It is probable that some or much of the listening observed was active listening, which involves holding judgment and

attending fully to the person speaking (Hutchby, 2005). In one of the focus groups, Vanessa had summed up the importance of listening well when she said, *“my students’ level of English is so incredibly low... so a supportive relationship for my students, for them, in the classroom means that I’m listening to them and they understand I help them.”* This seems to be important at all levels of adult immigrant ESL teaching. The quote from Vanessa also shows the role that listening plays in empathy – a teacher listening well shows students that they care, they understand them, and that they want to support them.

Heather expressed the importance of listening in the form of storytelling:

I think it is so important to connect on a human level and I know there is a lot of talk now about story telling but I think that is so key....You are talking about your lives. I think it’s really important with adults to hear their story and to share your own story to have that connection.

Storytelling and sharing like this may be an important aspect of being genuine too.

Of course, listening is not always easy. It is not just listening to the words. As Carl explained when asked what a supportive relationship looks like to him:

Being able to listen to students and to really listen, not just listen to the words they are saying, but there is an emotion or maybe there is an idea behind it and a good example of that...is with a problematic student acting out in class and you pull that student out of the room and have a bit of a talk and it turns out maybe some things are just not going well in their lives and they are lashing out because of it.

This also starts to go beyond just listening and into the idea of positive regard for others, and not judging someone on surface behaviours. As empathy includes the ability to understand and identify another's feelings and perspectives, listening is an important part of that, but listening alone is not enough. The other important aspect of empathy is the ability to communicate the understanding to the individual with whom one is empathizing. In his interview, Carl explained how difficult this is for some people.

So many times I've seen other people, it's like someone vents a frustration and suddenly there's imperative language and advice that this person didn't ask for, when really they just wanted you to say... you're not crazy for feeling that way. So I bring that into the classroom. You know students will feel certain ways and it's not my job to say snap out of it. That's not fair. Those are real emotions that people are going through.

Theme 12 Building empathy in students by modelling

In addition to a teacher's ability to listen being an important part of empathetic classroom behaviour, teachers also expressed the importance of building empathy in their adult immigrant ESL students. Vanessa (focus group) said:

When somebody looks very sad and they are obviously upset about something, even if they [at my level] can't vocalize it properly, I visually look very different. Immediately my smile drops and I say what's wrong? Then we try to figure it out and the students will mirror sometimes what I'm doing and they are watching me and they are trying to

almost echo, but with gestures. They are trying to show this student what I'm showing the student. So I always make sure to role model how you would go about empathizing with somebody.

When asked in the post-observation interview about behaviours in the classroom related to the core conditions and if they are influential, Sarah said, *"They (her students) help each other a lot and I think they [core conditions] are because the students feel like a group that cares about each other."* It is evident that there is a learning that seems to happen when teachers teach with empathetic behaviours.

Beth and Bob also explained the importance of modelling acceptance and empathy in relation to other groups. For example, Beth said:

When gay marriage was being discussed, I would just say I'm happy that everyone can be happy... I've always looked at those issues and conveyed my attitude, and I suppose they felt included... It's a bridge to Canadian attitudes.

Therefore, the empathetic behaviours that teachers use in the classroom may have a more far-reaching impact on more than just the relationship between teachers and students. It may play a role in integration of immigrants into Canadian society, and learning how to communicate effectively in a new cultural environment. As Heather said in a focus group:

I think by modeling it [empathy] in class I really believe that students pick it up. I actually would argue that you should teach empathy skills for showing empathy... it's

empowering the whole- I always think... outside of the classroom walls that you're empowering a whole community of people.

Theme 13. Stories of how empathetic teaching has helped students

Another theme that came up in relation to how empathetic behaviours was specific examples of how teacher empathy or empathetic behaviours have helped adult immigrant ESL students. In Bob's interview, he shared two stories:

There was one person in this really difficult group I had...and I think there was at least one person with some mental health issues that were causing her to lash out a bit, at me too, getting really upset about little things. And, maybe in the beginning it wasn't apparent that this was the cause of the issue and you might think that person is just taking it out on you or they have a bad temper or something....Throughout the year the student didn't come to me and say oh I have this diagnosis, but it became very clear that there was mental health issues at play that were causing that kind of behavior...Whether I was dealing with her being upset with me or upset with another student, I was trying to be calm and diffuse the situation. Obviously, you know if a student is getting really upset with you, you don't get really upset back because you have to be a professional and that's just not possible to get in an argument with a student.

This story shows how empathetic behaviours, and possibly behaviours that express positive regard, are important in classroom management, and especially to help teachers to deal with difficult behavior in the classroom, even when the cause of the behavior is not clear. As

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Bob expressed, *“it comes from more of an empathetic point of view rather than a negative point of view and it usually helps me in my interactions.”* It also shows that empathetic behaviours can help students get access to health care that may be needed. The alternative is an approach that is not empathetic, in which a student may be disciplined more harshly and is likely not to get the support that they need.

The second example from Bob was with a male student who would not accept when he was told his answer was incorrect:

I have no idea why he was that way but you could see like the little boy almost who's seeing (like) some parent or teacher is upset with him for getting the wrong answers or something. Yeah it was super annoying but also he wasn't born that way. Something had to have made him like that.

Once again, this shows how empathetic behaviours can help teachers relate to students in a positive manner. Carl also shared a student experience:

I had a student who really had a hard time controlling himself in terms of outbursts in the middle of class and saying some really hurtful things, not just to other students but to me. And so in one case with that student I let that student sort of have their rant and be very angry and hurt and say all these things and I just kind of- it was in the middle of class and I just kind of looked at that student and I said, are you finished. And then I quickly said, everyone's going to be working on something, why don't we go outside in

the hallway and let's just have a talk. And so that student proceeded to berate me, berate the students and I again sort of bit my tongue and said, anything else. And I just looked at that student just like this (empathetically) and that student opened up and I discovered that a lot of things are currently happening in that student's life that I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy. That student was also coming from a lot of trauma and I think the fact that someone actually sat there and let that student speak uninterrupted really made things much better. That student was much more engaged in class. That student wasn't lashing out. There were the occasional lapses but then I would give that student sort of a knowing look like I understand where you're coming from and they would look at me and they would go okay...it seemed like this was the first time an instructor had just looked at that person as a human being.

This example shows in detail the process for implementing empathetic behaviours and possibly behaviours related to positive regard, and how it helps student-teacher relationships by breaking down barriers, and then helping students feel more supported leading to more engagement in class. This may be especially important if the student has experienced some trauma in the past, which many adult immigrant students have.

It should be noted that there are many more examples shared by participants of how the core conditions have helped their relationships with students. More are included in the following section focused on positive regard.

Positive Regard.

Theme 14. Classroom behaviours that express positive regard

Classroom behaviours that express positive regard was a strong theme in the observations and post-observation interviews too. Overall, the observations support what the participants expressed in the focus groups – that positive regard is essential in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. Behaviours related to positive regard were observed in all classroom observations. For example in Sarah's class she was often smiled when students made mistakes with their language, and was patient, kind and caring throughout the whole class. At one stage in the class, she was explaining present progressive verb tense by demonstrating the sentence 'we are walking.' She took the arm of a student and walked arm in arm together. This showed a closeness, a warmth and caring that was there throughout the class. This kindness was also present in Carl and Bob's class. There were also examples of being non-judgmental towards students. For example, in Bob's class a student was asking what would happen if she did not come to class because the temperature outside was too cold. Although it could be easy to assume the student was being lazy or was not committed to the class, the teacher withheld judgment and instead approached the subject by comparing it to expectations for attendance Canadian workplaces.

Sub-Theme 14.1 Use of encouragement and affirmations

There were also many examples of encouragement, affirmation and positive reinforcement from all teachers that could be classified as behaviours related to positive regard. With Sarah's observation, there was a lot of affirming students' contributions, ideas, thoughts, and knowledge, so multiple times she said affirmations such as "good, good", "nice", "lovely" or "I like what you're doing", "you're so fast", "you know a lot."

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For Carl, he gave encouragement such as *“I think you did a good job with that”*, *“excellent”*, *“good job”*, *“yes, exactly”*. He also smiled and nodded his head as students discussed in groups, or did role-plays.

Bob also used a lot of affirming vocal fillers like *“okay”*, *“yeah”*, *“yeah, exactly that's right.”* When the students were practicing pronunciation, he would say, *“sounds great.”* When the students were doing activities he would say, *“you just have three left”* and there was often repeating back an understanding of what was said, which was a kind of affirmation as well.

All three teachers who were observed felt that encouragement and affirmations helped their students. Carl expressed how it helps his students gain confidence:

It really helps them build that confidence that they're using language, you know if not accurately then close too accurately... And I noticed that that is what they're looking for because if I do walk by them they sort of angle their body or they do that thing where they look at their partner and then they look at me...and just reassuring them that they've got it and that gets them going and I think that motivates them to use it more, not just in the class but outside.

Sarah felt it was important to emphasize the positive, *“I do it without thinking but I want to emphasize the positive and I want them to know that when they do something... positive that I see it.”*

Bob felt encouragement and affirmations were more for improving the learning outcomes of the students:

I look at most of these things as how they affect learning, not how they affect the relationship so much and I think...everyone needs more confidence when they're learning something new and being negative about someone's mistake isn't going to do them any favors. So, I think if you look at what's good and point out something they can do to build on that it's a better strategy than being negative when someone isn't achieving because I think that doesn't really give people the right kind of motivation to do better.

Encouragement and affirmations also show caring and warmth and a positive regard for students, so it may offer dual purposes of improving learning and connecting and improving teacher student relationships at the same time.

Another important aspect of behaviours related to positive regard, is, much like with empathetic behaviours, that there is a modelling affect with students. As Bob explained,

I think students look to the instructor to set a tone for how to talk to each other or how to act. And if the instructors snappy or disrespectful to students, I'm sure that you would see more of students treating each other that way.

This also supports the idea that positive regard is helpful for the students in other ways, possibly even outside of the classroom, when they are interacting in broader society.

Sub-Theme 14.2 Use of humour

Humour was one theme that was prevalent in the classroom observations, but was not mentioned much in the focus groups. It is also related to classroom behaviours that express

positive regard. In the classroom observations, humour was used in all classes, and may have an influence on student-teacher relationships, so it is discussed here. Bob used some humour in his class, and there was a lot of smiling and laughing, for example, when his class was talking about an imaginary situation where they won the lottery. Carl used humour throughout his class. One example was when he put his glasses on in different places on his nose to indicate what might look more formal or casual. At one point, he put the glasses close to the end of his nose and pretended to be an old man. The class laughed at this. In his interview, Carl explained why he used humour, in part to relax the students, but also as a learning tool:

I'm humorous. I put those jokes in there and initially students will kind of- you can see it in their eyes like what did I get myself into....But they know or over time it usually opens them up. They feel a little more relaxed and they get the humour.

It serves so many functions. Of course, yeah it does help them relax and then does in a way, like even if it's not necessarily related to the teaching, I know the students will kind of use that as an anchor and they'll sort of go, okay what happened after that or what happened before that moment of the funny thing and then they kind of go, oh yeah we did this.

Sarah also used a lot of humour in her class. For example, making a funny face when a student made an error, or during a game of charades commenting on how a student was playing a very small piano. Sarah explained that she used humour to teach about culture, and to create a fun atmosphere:

Well it's my approach in life anyway and it's also often a Canadian cultural aspect that we do. We often will joke...in my experience anyway. I think it's a good modeling for students to see that learning can be fun. So the general use of humour to create an easier atmosphere towards studying.

As relationships build though I really think humour is important so I will try and use humor too.

From these teachers' perspectives, the use of humour in the classroom may be related to the creation of a safe, relaxed classroom environment where students feel open to learning.

Theme 15. Stories of how teaching with positive regard has helped students

Much like with empathetic classroom behaviours, participants also shared stories that show the impact of positive regard on student teacher relationships, and on students in general. For example, Heather shared this story:

I have many examples that came to mind of students that I didn't really want to give a chance to. They were very difficult. They took a lot of my time and my initial response was that I actually don't know if I like this person. I can't put this time into this person and this is not me patting myself on the shoulder but of course wanting to be a good professional and educator, [so] you say okay I'm going to give them a chance. And through those relationships, by giving somebody a chance, I watched the most amazing change and I found out things. I found out by giving positive regard, even when I didn't

want to, I found out this individual had a mental health issue that was causing her to cause me grief. I don't mean that she was but before I knew there was a mental health issue I couldn't do better because I didn't know better and once I knew and we had the conversations and we kept it real, she just blossomed. I mean she just sent me (years later) a little testimonial and just talked about how she was so empowered and it's not because I was so great. It's because I realized I need to do my job here and reach out to her and through that relationship and seeing her in a positive regard we actually changed her whole relationship and we were able to work together. And I think it also leads to a positive classroom culture if you see that everybody in the room is seeing that they're going to be treated with warmth and respect no matter who they, everyone knows who the trouble maker is in the room but when you show compassion toward them and you treat them the same way as everybody else I really believe that that classroom culture becomes more positive and it's also far reaching because it goes into the community then where you're strengthening the community. There's social development. I mean a classroom is a little community and people see that. It's modeled by a teacher and you take that outside of the classroom and it actually improves and strengthens our communities as well to me when you model treating everyone the same and treating them, even that guy that person in the rooms that's driving everyone crazy. So, I think it's really invaluable.

This example highlights the importance and impact positive regard can have. In this case, a health condition was recognized and then could be accommodated appropriately. This also led to a healthier, more productive relationship between the teacher and the student that was

beneficial to both of them – allowing the student to progress more, and making the class easier to manage for the teacher. As discussed in the previous section on empathetic classroom behaviours, behaviours that express positive regard can play an important role in classroom management. In addition, there was a possible impact on the classroom culture, and the community as a whole. Another participant, Bob, also emphasized the impact that modelling of positive regard in the adult immigrant ESL classroom could have in the community:

You set a great example for them to take into the workplace when ... they know who's being annoying and you still are kind to them and treat them like everyone else...I've had it happen so many times that the person who bugs me in the first week ends up being the one who I'll never forget and later on I understand why they're acting that way but if you reacted negatively to them in the first week, then maybe they would leave or maybe... both sides would put up their defenses and you'd end up butting heads for the whole time.

Another similar story was shared by Veronica:

I had one student who was continuously negative about one aspect of the immigration process and it bled into everything she said to the point that I would have to lay down boundaries... because she was monopolizing, but I did at the end of the term send everybody a little note on how I appreciated how she could be a great advocate and she wrote back and said nobody had ever in Canada said anything nice to her like that or probably ever and I can believe it. You know which I think that did go out into the

community and I hope that she could channel those things into advocacy because she would be great. She really would be.

Another participant, Heather, commented on this story, saying, *“the very thing that made her unlikeable was the thing that you could find something likeable to comment on. You empowered her.”* In this way, teachers seem to perceive behaviours that express positive regard as a powerful tool to use in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. By noticing students and seeing and acknowledging their strengths, teachers have shown here that students have opportunity to open up, and to be empowered to achieve more.

Genuineness.

Theme 16. Classroom behaviours that express genuineness

Classroom behaviours that express genuineness were observed in the classroom observations, but not as readily as behaviours related to empathy and positive regard. Often it is the small things that matter when observing classes, so an absence of large, dramatic examples of behaviours that express genuineness does not necessarily mean that genuineness is not as important, or not implemented as much in the classroom. An example is when the researcher and research assistant were introduced to Sarah’s class. Sarah explained that we were there to watch her, and not the students. She made a somewhat humorous, nervous face at that time to show the class she was a little nervous. This is also an example of being real and showing real emotion in the moment, so that students were aware of how the situation was impacting her personally.

Sub-Theme 16.1 Sharing oneself

There were some classroom observations that support what the participants expressed in the focus groups – that genuineness is a key component in building relationships in the adult

immigrant ESL classroom. For example, Sarah said to her class “*can I show you a secret*” and then showed them a safety pin attached to her shirt. She explained how she used it to prevented static electricity in the winter. This kind of personal sharing is not only helpful information for the student, but is a sharing of personal life of the teacher. Bob also did this when he talked about the cold weather and how he liked lots of snow, so he could do more winter activities.

In Carl’s class, when the class was asked to talk about social gatherings and the types of gatherings they prefer, Carl said, “*Personally, I like small get-togethers, quiet music.*” Later when talking about weddings, he talked about his own future wedding and how it would not be formal. “*We will all go to Ye’s Buffet.*” Although Carl may not have been completely serious, his sharing also showed an opening up to the class, and the fact that he included them in his plans also shows a closeness, or focus on the closeness of the student teacher relationship in that class. Later in the class, Carl also said, “*this became a class where we learned about each other’s secrets again,*” hinting that personal sharing was a common occurrence in the class, from the students, as well as the teacher.

Sub-Theme 16.2 Being friendly/reducing hierarchy in the classroom

In addition, there were many examples of teachers expressing genuineness by reducing the hierarchical teacher student relationship, and being my friend-like in their classroom. For example, in all classes observed, the teachers circulated in the classroom, and would often lean over, kneel down or sit beside students in order to get down to students’ levels rather than looking down on them. In Sarah’s class, at one point a student demonstrating walking arm in arm with the teacher, which seemed friendlier, and reduced the feeling of hierarchy. In addition, all teachers communicated respectfully with their students, treating them like adults and peers rather than being too directive. For example, when some of Carl’s students looked like they wanted to

take pictures of his notes, he said, *“Sorry, did you want to take pictures of the questions?”*

Another example is in Bob’s class when he corrected errors, he would do it gently, without bringing negative attention to it, by saying. *“Take another look at number three”, or “Try this one again.”*

This behaviour that expresses genuineness and reducing hierarchy may also have an influence on trust. Cornelius-White (2007) found an aspect of trust was non-directivity in which teachers respect and share power with students.

Overall, the classroom observations support what was discussed in the focus groups and post-observation interviews – that genuineness is very important for a teacher in the adult ESL classroom, although further observations may have increased the amount of data to support this idea.

Other Themes.

Theme 17. The little things matter.

One conclusion drawn from the observations and confirmed by participants in the interviews was that the little things and how much they matter. When observing classes, we rarely saw large, dramatic examples that could be classified as behaviours expressing the core conditions of empathy, genuineness or positive regard. Those kinds of more prominent actions seemed to be rare, and maybe they are just rarer in everyday life. We did, however, see many smaller actions and behaviors that we deemed to be behaviours that implemented these core conditions. Participants were asked about these small actions and if they were influential and were an important part of the development of a supportive classroom atmosphere, and all observed participants agreed that they were.

This is important to remember when analyzing the findings from observations in this study. A seemingly small comment or action such as opening a classroom door to let a cool breeze in because a student looks hot, may seem insignificant, but it is probable that this small act, in combination with many other small actions from the teacher, builds a supportive relationship with the students. As Bob said in his post observation interview, *“it gets better and better through the session because even if you are doing everything right by day three you probably don't have a really comfortable group that has...jelled with each other.”* Carl also commented that, *“little things, like affirming that what they say in class or what they're using is correct or whatever will go a long way.”* In Sarah's interview, she talked about little acts of empathy, genuineness and positive regard leading to trust, *“consistency builds trust... I group it [core conditions] into respect... consistent acts of that.”*

Theme 18. Barriers to creating supportive relationships.

Another theme was barriers that teachers faced in creating supportive relationships with their students. This theme of barriers is focused on anything that hinders the development of supportive relationships and behaviours that express the core conditions with students. Of course, it is not always possible to embody the core conditions, as much one would like. Sarah explained the challenges of the teacher being human, and having their own emotions and the difficulties with always controlling them:

It's a human experience in a classroom. So is it positive or negative? It's both. If I have a bad day and I am irritated, then it shows for sure. I can't not be real, as real as possible. I try not to be a corpse but sometimes a little bit more, come on you guys. It's a little bit

more and they sense that. I don't like it. I want them to have a good [class]. I think we're human, we can't just give, give, give.

Bob added, *"In terms of having positive regard, obviously some people just bug you and then you have to kind of just make sure that you treat them the same as the other people."*

Michelle also commented on this challenge:

I try to look at my students as the same, you know we are all on the same footing, whatever, then you've got one or two students that just are a little bit more- I'm not even sure if demanding is the right word. It's just they're not getting it or they're demanding ...then my positive regard for that student is not quite the same as another student. I try not to let that influence my teaching of the whole classroom or when I'm marking their paper or their paragraph or whatever. So, I try not to let it influence me but it's a difficult one.

Heather, talked about many of the barriers here, touching on teachers being human and having their own personal emotions that they bring to the table, how opening up to students is not always easy, and the challenge of teaching students who have different cultural expectations of what a teacher should be like:

Just being human, like you come to class as an instructor with your own set of frustrations or maybe don't feel particularly sincere or feel like sharing or exposing yourself... I think there's a little bit of ego involved with opening yourself up in that

setting and making yourself vulnerable. Traditional ideas of what teachers should be with the diverse students that we have - I think there are very specific...expectations on how you should lead, how you should be, and having taught in Korea or other cultures I've certainly seen that the teacher has a role that's not a more emotional, emotive, empathic role. It's definitely the complete opposite and when your students in your classroom now in Canada are from Korea, just acknowledging that they're looking for something different in a teacher than we might be here in the Canadian setting.

Sarah also talked about the idea of cultural differences too, but more related to the way students interact with teachers, how that can be challenging, and the need for patience:

I mean the students that I'm teaching now have come long and far to be here and ...culturally they do things... differently than us, so we might call it pestering, but they will call it persistence maybe and that can become really irritating or not knowing the cultural signs and how can they know of interrupting, when to interrupt of course. Like those things that we have to learn, that we learn automatically. So those can be button pushers and yeah if you have a bad day for sure, you're tired, too much is going on.

Vanessa also talked about the challenges of controlling emotions and the importance of modelling this:

It can be hard as a teacher to put the emotion away sometimes and it's very interesting to teach your students that piece that you can still feel that thing, but you don't lash out and because we still need to respect each other, that you kind of try to control that.

Related to cultural differences, gender, and dealing with students that have different views on gender roles was also identified as a barrier. As Michelle said,

I'm just thinking about being female and the attitudes of a male coming from a male dominant culture and then you're the female up there saying you've got to do this and take this test and whatever and they're looking at you like nope or I don't even know what's going through their mind but it must be quite the culture shift.

Heather explained this further, *"I had a class of ten men who were engineers and honestly empathy wouldn't work there. I actually started off being myself and I realized that's not going to work. So that's a definite barrier."*

Barriers to empathy were identified too. As Vanessa explained, *"If you've experienced one culture more than another or you know more about one culture than another you might have more empathy for that particular group."* Related to this, Beth talked about how important and understanding of culture, history and current events is:

I also think it's important to be well informed. If you know what is going on in the Congo and hear this person has emerged with another chance you have to respect them and I'm not saying you should express sympathy but you have to know what they've been through

and what this second chance means to them. But you need to stay well informed. You come from Honduras, right. You come from Venezuela, you know what's going on there.

Bob talking about the student role in developing supportive relationships, and how some students are more open to making connections:

Some people really want to connect with you and get to know you and others want to kind of like blend into the wall at the back of the classroom. So, there are certain people who you have numerous chances over your time with them to show empathy towards them and others you don't really have that opportunity.

Another barrier that was identified was about lack of time. Developing relationships with the students takes time, and, as Beth pointed out, “*The amount of work that has to be covered*” can hinder this. As Beth explained further:

You also need time to get to know people. If you've got ten minutes for each student teacher interview, you can use some of that time to get to know them but it's not enough because there are other things that you have to do. You need time.

Grace agreed with that lack of time and too much work can hinder development of relationships with the students, “*That (lack of time) can add a lot of stress to the teacher and that can sort of kill any- that is the killer of all of these (core conditions).*”

Bob explained another barrier in regards to the need for balance between solid technical teaching skills, and developing relationships with students:

Someone in our focus group said teaching is all about relationships and I think there's examples of people who want to will stay guarded and do a great job of teaching English and people who develop really deep relationships but might forget about a bit of the teaching along the way.

Overall, there were many barriers to developing supportive relationships with students that were identified. Many of these barriers were related to difficulties in being empathetic, for example, not understanding some cultures more than others; having positive regard, for example, students with irritating behaviours and the challenge in controlling emotions; and being genuine, for example, the ability to open up and be vulnerable in the classroom. There were some suggestions that were made to overcome these barriers too, which will be discussed under Recommendations for the Classroom, in the following chapter.

Research Question 3. What is the relationship between empathy, genuineness and positive regard in building supportive relationships between adult immigrant ESL teachers and their students?

Data on teacher perceptions of this topic was gathered from focus groups and interviews conducted within this study, and data for researcher reflections on this topic was also gathered from classroom observations conducted within this study.

Theme 19. The most essential condition is empathy.

In this study, the condition that was most rich in data was empathy. Participants made many comments and expressed many ideas related to empathy, and in addition, they exhibited many behaviours related to empathy. Participants overwhelmingly saw empathy as the most essential condition for building supportive relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. For example, Vanessa said, “yes definitely it’s very important to have empathy for your students” Mary said, “everything rests on empathy and community and people feeling where everyone else is. That’s number one.” Heather explained, “I think everyone needs empathy to come their way. I think it promotes and models strong leadership within a community. So, you can’t lead well if you don’t have empathy.”

This data is in line with Magro (2009) and McAllister and Irvine (2002) who found in their studies that empathy was key to effectively teaching newcomers.

As Sarah said,

If you didn’t have empathy it would be difficult to have a great degree of positive regard and without empathy why bother being genuine...I think empathy is the key here. You can have positive regard, you can have genuineness, but what is the quality without empathy?

Grace agreed with this, saying, “*You kind of need empathy for all these other things to exist I think and if you can’t really be empathic then, I mean, how do you relate to people then?*”

Beth explained the importance of empathy, especially for immigrant students:

I think probably empathy is the most important. They’re coming full of stuff that nobody knows about and if you can’t talk about it, you can’t get over it. And, not that they’re

going to talk about it to that extent with you as opposed to a counselor, but I think it's really important. The most important is empathy.

Bob also felt empathy was important, and related some recent events in his class:

I think empathy is really important and even just in the last month there's been a few students in my class who've been going through stuff and they're away from school and it's not easy and it's really important to be empathetic there.

Overall, empathy was clearly seen as the most important condition for building supportive relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and for many, maybe one of the most important parts of teaching in general. These results support Aspy and Roebuck's (1977) findings that empathy was the governing core condition.

It should be noted that positive regard is strongly related to empathy, so it is often difficult to separate data between these two conditions. The care that is shown from teachers can often be attributed to behaviours related to empathy and positive regard together, as well as other conditions.

Theme 20. The inter-relatedness of the core conditions.

This theme is about the relationship between the core conditions and how they worked together. Firstly, I would like to present data on the importance of the core conditions overall, and the importance of the student-teacher relationship. The majority of teachers in this study felt empathy, genuineness and positive regard were essential to being effective ESL teachers in general. As Carl said,

Teaching a language is not just those surface things of grammar and vocabulary. There's a feeling to it. There's a cultural element to it. You have to take into consideration people's personalities. You want people to feel like themselves when they're using language just like any other medium. You have to be able to express and so being empathic and giving positive regard and all of those things are highly important, just as important as the technical things. You know you've got to know your stuff. You've got to be knowledgeable with what you're teaching. But none of that would matter if you didn't understand your students or look at them in such a way that they're humans.

Heather said:

Learning happens best through relationships, that's my philosophy. We [have] all [had] the awful math teacher, we all have a story of a teacher that humiliated us, embarrassed us, maybe didn't engage with us and we end up hating that subject, so I think the key to learning is relationships.

In contrast to this, one participant, Bob, did express that although teachers' relationships with students were important, good teaching techniques were more important.

I'm choosing to try to build positive connections with people in the class. So definitely I think it's valuable. I just think if I had to choose between good teaching techniques or good relationships I would go with good teaching technique because that is what my job

is about above all, but developing good relationships makes people comfortable, makes them have a better time here, makes me have a better time here and I think everyone learns more when they feel comfortable, safe, happy, and relaxed.

This comment aligns with Lowman (1996) who found that the most effective teachers had clear organization, presented in interesting ways, and they could communicate positive regard and motivate students as well.

There was other data collected that addressed more specifically the relationship between the core conditions and how they worked together. Heather saw empathy as the key condition and that genuineness and positive regard could be seen as being within empathy, *“I would say empathy is the overarching core condition. I guess empathy is the governing condition and positive regard and genuineness fall into that maybe.”*

Bob explained that having all of the core conditions was important:

[It] seems like they fit together and it might be hard to have any of them if you're totally missing one, if you're not being genuine then it's how could you be empathetic? If you don't have positive regard for the people in your class then also how could you be empathetic?

Carl also expressed that all of the core conditions played an important role for him:

Teaching a language is not just those surface things of grammar and vocabulary. There's a feeling to it. There's a cultural element to it. You have to take into consideration

peoples personalities. You want people to feel like themselves when they're using language just like any other medium. You have to be able to express and so being empathic and giving positive regard and all of those things are highly important, just as important as the technical things. You know you've got to know your stuff. You've got to be knowledgeable with what you're teaching. But none of that would matter if you didn't understand your students or look at them in such a way that they're humans.

This data supports Cornelius-White and Harbaugh's (2010) conclusion that while empathy is likely one of the most important contributors to facilitate learning, all of the core conditions are important and are more effective when they are all present and work together to build relationships between students and teachers.

Carl explained how empathy represented the governing, core condition that genuineness and positive regard stem from:

The basis really for me is empathy. Making sure you're able to take yourself out of your own ego and seeing things from a different perspective sort of paves the way for looking at students and people in general with positive regard and also opens you up to be genuine too because then you see that a teacher needs to not just be this entity that no one can touch....I notice with other instructors something that helps them is empathy. Even if they aren't really good at being empathic, you know maybe perhaps they're always very like why does this student act this way and they usually come to that sort of conclusion. Like well perhaps maybe they're this way because this has happened to them and if that happened to me then I would be the same way. So yeah in a way I feel like

empathy is the biggest thing that leads to genuineness and positive regard.

There are many other examples in the previous sections of how the core conditions work together to create supportive relationships with teachers and students in adult immigrant ESL classrooms. The student stories are particularly good examples of this, highlighting especially the way that empathy and positive regard work together to help teachers help their students.

Theme 21. Trust, respect and the core conditions.

The focus of research question three is more about how the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard relate to each other, but it is worth mentioning that participants did also comment on the core conditions and how they related to trust and respect.

Quite a few teachers mentioned trust and, in general, it was seen as an essential part of the teacher student relationship. Participant comments related trust to safety. Trust was seen by many teachers as being especially important for immigrant students. As Beth explained:

I think their trust is so important because you represent Canada/Canadians, and they are in a place where they don't know where they are and who these people are and [if they] can trust them. You are the bridge in a way.

Heather discussed trust being linked to being student-centred, and having a more friend-like relationship with the students.

If you actually listen there is so much they are telling us and they can teach us too. So, you are not the master. So, that of course leads to qualities like respect and mutual

respect, mutual understanding, trust and just forming deep connections... what a supportive relationship between a teacher a student looks like to me is over time a friendship and I think that's very different from the model that I had in school, even in University as an adult learner. To me it looks like a friendship because when the trust is there then there is the openness to learning.

Respect was also seen as very important by many participants, for students and by students. Here I am referring to regard for the feelings and rights of others. For example, Heather explained:

For me it has to be mutual. So instead of what I can do as a teacher to help them, how is this relationship mutual, so to me it's not a master and a pupil type relationship that I grew up with personally but it is more that .. it's two equals and we are sharing knowledge... we are all lifelong learners and we can learn from each other as adults.

This quote shows the how respect is related to genuineness and specifically the being more friend-like and reducing the hierarchy between students and teachers in the classroom. As Heather expanded on, *"I don't like the hierarchy with adults. Seeing them for who they are really as opposed to seeing them as your student. Don't dumb it down."*

This respect was seen as important for all students, but some teachers highlighted that it was especially important for immigrant students to feel it if they had a higher status in their former country. As Michelle explained, *"He's at level three, starting right at the beginning and having to learn. He's got some kind of degree in whatever, but he's got level three in English."*

Some teachers commented on the importance of respect with low language level learners.

Mary explained:

I always need to be remembering my students as adults. So often I see in other interactions that they are being treated as though they are children or as though they are stupid. That to me is such a violation of any kind of respect for them.

Other teachers talked about the need to build respect in the class as a whole, between students:

For me it is so important in the class to always say we respect everyone. Like oh teacher ... she's a farmer and I'm a this or whatever from their culture, but for me it's not about that, we leave all of that at the door. (Vanessa)

Sarah explained that she was careful to monitor respectful behavior in the classroom. *"I never let people snicker, laugh, make fun, never. That just never will happen. I don't want that in my class."*

Overall, all teachers felt it was important that respect was central to the classroom environment. As Carl put it: *"we respect everyone because everyone can contribute to a greater good and I also think that we all kind of have in the back of our minds that everyone can learn."*

The core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard were often seen as part of building of trust and respect. This aligns with one aspect of what Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) suggested, as they expressed that teachers that showed positive regard trusted

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students. Grace talked about being genuine in the care that she had for students and how that led to trust, “I was thinking of genuineness as being more about the amount that I cared about what I was doing. So, in that way I felt I always did care about what I was doing and so I think that that helped the students trust me a little bit more.”

Sarah commented on the relationship between trust, respect and being genuine and empathetic:

How can they trust you if they don't sense you're genuine. How can they feel seen and if they don't trust you, how can they feel that you understand them and empathize if they don't trust you? ...and respect the same I would say. These are very hard things. These are not quantifiable.

Vanessa talked about all three core conditions and their importance in building trust and respect:

It's very important to have empathy for your students especially...[because] there are a lot of students with trauma who come to school....If I just [say] well okay and then I just walk away, that student has lost some respect and has lost some trust with me in that one second interaction. It's already gone and it's very hard to get that back. So, I think we all have said how important the relationship is with student and teacher in order for the students to feel safe and to feel like they are enthusiastic about learning and that they want to be there, so the empathy piece is so important because it lets them see...we were talking about how genuine you are with them and that you do care.

The core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard were seen as playing an important role in building of trust and respect.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This qualitative study explored the roles that the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard play in creating supportive relationships in adult immigrant English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. These core conditions were first introduced by the American psychologist Carl Rogers (1995) as the basis of the Person-Centred Approach (PCA). According to the PCA, we all have an innate tendency to grow to our full potential and the three core conditions need to be present in a relationship to create a climate for this growth. There is a lot of evidence to support the idea that teachers that are more effective are empathetic, genuine and have positive regard (Aspy & Roebuck, 1982; Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2009). A review of related literature showed that many of these studies focused on elementary and high school students and that there have been relatively few studies that explore the core conditions with adult students, and even fewer focused on adult immigrant ESL students. There appears to be a strong need for more research on effective adult immigrant education, as Canada receives more than 300,000 immigrants each year (Government of Canada, 2017) and this number is likely to continue to increase as Canada's population ages, and there is an increasing need for immigrants to fulfill the country's workforce needs. Research to improve adult immigrant ESL education is not only important for the adult immigrants themselves, in order for them to succeed

in reaching their goals more quickly, but also for the federal and provincial governments who fund settlement education programs. Therefore, this study was aimed at gaining a clearer picture of the importance of the core conditions for this particular context: for teachers of adult immigrant ESL students. Teacher perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness and positive regard were explored, as well as how these conditions were implemented by adult immigrant ESL teachers in their classrooms. In addition, this study gathered data on the relationship between the core conditions in building supportive relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

This study took a qualitative approach, gathering data from 12 adult immigrant ESL participants through focus groups, classroom observations and post-observation interviews. Focus groups and interviews were recorded, and field notes were taken in the classroom observations. All recorded data was transcribed and coded to identify themes, and this was arranged into common categories, and then themes and sub-themes. A research assistant independently reviewed the data, and participants also conducted member checks on all transcripts and themes identified in order to verify accuracy.

The findings of this study support much of the previous research on the core conditions in education, suggesting that that empathy, positive regard and genuineness are essential in building supportive relationships in the adult, immigrant ESL classroom. The findings also suggest that for building these supportive relationships, empathy is the most important, governing condition.

Discussion

I will now turn to discussing the main findings, with reference to previous research and with some personal reflections. Discussion in this section will be structured by each research question for clarity and ease of understanding.

Research Question 1. What are adult immigrant ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard in building supportive relationships with their students?

The majority of participants felt that supportive relationships and the core conditions were essential to be an effective adult immigrant ESL teacher. These results support Hattie (2009) who found in his synthesis of meta-analyses that positive teacher-student relationships were essential for learning to occur and that the nature of teacher-student relationship was one of the most important contributions of the teacher.

Out of all three core conditions, empathy was most rich in data. Themes that were related to teacher perceptions of the core condition of empathy in building supportive relationships with adult immigrant ESL students included *Understanding the unique challenges immigrants face*, *Developing understanding from personal experience*, and *The effect of empathy on learning*

Participants identified empathy as having a positive effect on learning in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, which supports similar results from Aspy and Roebuck (1982) and Rogers, Lyon & Tausch, (2013).

Many participants expressed that empathy was especially important for teachers of adult immigrant ESL students because of some of the unique challenges and situations that immigrants face such as settlement difficulties, dealing with trauma, separation from family, learning a new language and culture, and changes in status in a new country. Maybe because of all of these challenges, participants expressed that they often take on a different kind of teaching role that is similar to being a mother. This is not surprising to me, as adult immigrant ESL teachers are on the front line when it comes to settlement support, and often issues related to settlement and trauma will surface in the classroom. Adult immigrant ESL teachers are often the first step on the

way to getting the help needed for the adult immigrant ESL student. In addition, adult immigrant ESL teachers have the task of teaching culture to immigrant students, as well as language. Culture and language go hand in hand, and are both important parts of the Canadian Language Benchmark Curriculum guidelines (Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012), which is used to guide instruction in all adult immigrant ESL classes funded by the government of Canada (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada). Having said that, it is also recognized that the immigrant student's culture needs to be honoured and retained, and so it is often a difficult balance of teaching about culture in the new country, and acknowledging the culture of the country where students came from. In this balancing act, empathy seems to play an important role.

In addition, some teachers talked about helping students in a way that could reach beyond their teaching role. Although not explored deeply in this study, Toi and Batson (1982) showed perspective taking of someone in need leads to more willingness for altruistic helping. Some data in this study supports this finding, as participants expressed the importance of perspective taking and empathy in the classroom, and some teachers gave examples that could be classified as altruistic helping.

Many participants developed their empathetic approach through personal experiences as immigrants themselves, or experience living in a foreign country or environment. There is some evidence to show that it is easier to take the perspective of another person when one has experienced a similar situation (Gerace, Day, Casey & Mohr, 2015). There was more mention of teachers placing themselves back in their experiences and evoking the feelings that came with it, but there was also some teachers who talked about hypothetically imagining what it would be like to be in their student's place. I would speculate that both of these techniques are important in

developing understanding and empathy for adult immigrant ESL students.

There was a lot of data related to positive regard in this study too. Participants expressed that positive regard was very important in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

Themes that were related to teacher perceptions of the core condition of positive regard in building supportive relationships with adult immigrant ESL students included *Being non-judgmental and accepting*; *Being kind, warm and caring*; *Creating a feeling of safety*, and *The effect of positive regard on learning*.

Participants identified positive regard as having a positive effect on learning in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, which supports similar results from Motschnig-Pitrik and Standl (2013), Cornelius-White (2007), and Aspy and Roebuck (1982).

Being non-judgmental and accepting was central to many of the teachers' approaches to teaching adult immigrant ESL students. Many participants talked about looking beyond surface behaviors that may be negative and accepting people even if their behaviour is sometimes challenging with an understanding that many behaviours stem from the challenges that adult immigrants face. It was expressed that this needs to be balanced with classroom management and meeting expectations for behaviour too. The other behaviour related to positive regard that was prevalent was related to being kind, warm and caring to students. This was often expressed through encouraging comments, or affirmations. Participants all felt that this was very important as an adult immigrant ESL teacher for creating supportive relationships, and for learning. Participants expressed the importance of creating a physically and emotionally safe environment in the classroom. This may be especially important in the adult immigrant ESL classroom because students may be coming from situations where they did not feel safe.

Hattie (2009) found that feedback ranked highly as a positive influence on student

learning. This study gave some evidence that offering feedback in a positive manner and eliminating any shame related to making errors is a successful technique for adult immigrant ESL teachers. This is very much linked to being non-judgmental in the class too. Participants also expressed the importance of inclusion and ensuring students felt like part of the group.

There was a lot of data related to genuineness in this study, although it was less prolific than empathy and positive regard.

Themes that were related to teacher perceptions of the core condition of genuineness in building supportive relationships with adult immigrant ESL students included *Opening up - sharing oneself* and *Creating friend-like relationships/reducing hierarchy*.

Participants expressed that genuineness plays an important role in developing relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, which supports similar results from Aspy and Roebuck (1982) and Rogers, Lyon & Tausch, (2013).

One of the main themes related to genuineness was the idea of mutual sharing, and that teachers need to open up and share personal experiences, feelings and opinions in order to open the door for students to also share with them, and the class. Rogers (1969) had talked about this when he explained that genuineness made it easier to get close to people, as it encourages others to be more real as well. This may be in the form of sharing about their personal lives, sharing experiences or sharing opinions. Findings also show that admitting flaws was an important part of this sharing. Participants expressed that it was important for teachers to show that they did not know all of the answers and that they made mistakes too.

Cranton and Carusetta (2004) found teachers who understand themselves well are more likely to be genuine in the classroom. Results in this study reflect this too. Many teachers talked about becoming more genuine as they became more experienced teachers as they were able to be

more relaxed and more themselves in the classroom.

Another aspect of genuineness that was prevalent was about reducing hierarchy. Many participants felt that they needed more friend-like relationship with their students, rather than a traditional, hierarchical student-teacher relationship, especially because the students are adults themselves. Participants expressed that this may be especially important for immigrant students, as many come from educational systems where hierarchy and power distance between teachers and students may be more pronounced. Hofstede's studies on power distance place countries such as China (80) and India (77), as high on the Power Distance Index, compared to the world average of 55 (Power Distance, 2009). These countries are two of the top source countries for Canadian immigration to Canada in 2017 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2018).

Overall, the results above related to the empathy, genuineness and positive regard, support previous research done such as Cornelius-White (2007), and Aspy and Roebuck (1982) who found high levels of empathy, genuineness and positive regard were found to have significant positive effects on student outcomes and interpersonal functioning.

Although not readily related to the core conditions, it should be noted that another theme identified was the importance of being student-centred.

Concerning my own reflections on these findings, much of it was not surprising, based on what I had reviewed in past research on the core conditions. What was unexpected was the amount of data on safety and how important that was in adult immigrant ESL classrooms. This is logical, as many immigrants come from unsafe situations, but I had not predicated that it would be so central. It would be interesting to research this area further in order to get more detail on how teacher levels of the core conditions impact the feeling of safety in the classroom.

Research Question 2. How do adult immigrant ESL teachers implement empathy,

genuineness and positive regard in their classrooms?

Data related to this research question was primarily gathered from classroom observations conducted within this study, but also through what the participants talked about in the focus groups and through the post-observation interviews. Overall, the observations and post-observation interviews support what the participants expressed in the focus groups.

One conclusion drawn from the observations and confirmed by participants in the interviews was that the little things and how much they matter. When observing classes, large, dramatic examples of behaviours related to the core conditions were rare to see; however, many smaller behaviors were seen that were deemed to be implementing the core conditions. Participants indicated that these small acts, in combination with many other small actions from the teacher over time built a supportive relationship with their students. These results support Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) who suggested that warmth was conveyed by moment-to-moment, small actions that form a relational foundation.

There was a lot of data related to how empathy is implemented in the adult immigrant ESL classroom in this study. All participants that were observed implemented empathetic classroom behaviours in their classrooms.

Themes that were related to how participants implement the core condition of empathy in their adult immigrant ESL classroom included *Empathetic classroom behaviours*, *Building empathy in students by modelling*, and *Stories of how empathetic teaching has helped students*.

Empathetic classroom behaviours was a prominent theme in the observations and post-observation interviews, with many observed teacher behaviours indicating that empathy is crucial in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. Empathy was implemented through behaviours such as expressing understanding of challenging personal situations to students, or by expressing

support and understanding to students during challenging classroom activities, for example role plays or language activities. Another way that empathy was implemented in the classroom was through listening. Carl Rogers (1995) felt that active listening was required for empathy to be present and results in this study gave evidence to support this. All participants who were observed listened intently to their students in the class as they gave answers to questions, asked questions, or shared ideas and opinions. Participants expressed in focus groups and post-observation interviews how important listening was to show understanding and empathy to students. They also expressed the importance of building empathy in their adult immigrant ESL students by modelling empathy in the class and encouraging it amongst students. Participants also shared stories of specific students who had been helped greatly by their empathetic approach. These stories were particularly important as they often showed how teacher behaviours related to empathy, in combination with behaviours related to other core conditions such as positive regard, helped students grow, which really highlights the Person-Centred Approach and its benefits.

There was a lot of data in this study related to how positive regard is implemented in the adult immigrant ESL classroom in this study. All participants that were observed implemented classroom behaviours related to positive regard in their classrooms. Overall, the observations support what the participants expressed in the focus groups – that positive regard is essential in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

Themes that were related to how participants implement the core condition of positive regard in their adult immigrant ESL classroom included *Classroom behaviours that express positive regard*, and *Stories of how teaching with positive regard has helped students*.

Classroom behaviours that express positive regard was a prominent theme in the observations and post-observation interviews too. Positive regard was implemented through encouragement, affirmations and positive reinforcement, as well as participants being non-judgmental and positive in the way they approached student questions, comments and error correction. Affirmations/encouragement included positive comments such as *“lovely”*, *“I like what you’re doing”*, *“excellent”*, *“good job”*, *“sounds great.”* These comments show caring and warmth and a positive regard for students, so they may offer dual purposes of improving learning and connecting and improving teacher student relationships. In addition, humour was another way that participants showed positive regard for their students. Humour was prevalent in the classroom observations with a lot of smiling, laughing, and friendly joking. Participants explained the use of humour in the classroom as being related to the creation of a safe, relaxed classroom environment where students felt open to learning. These findings are similar to the way Cornelius-White and Harbaugh’s (2010) described warmth and how teachers in the classroom can convey it.

Participants also shared stories of specific students who had been helped greatly by their teacher conveying positive regard, where they had held judgment and looked beyond surface behaviours and this had allowed the student to flourish and learn. These challenging surface behaviours were often linked to mental health issues. These findings are important as many of these stories illustrate a reduction in stress and anxiety in adult immigrant ESL student. Rogers, Lyon, and Tausch, (2013) described research done by Tausch that found when teachers offered high levels of empathy, genuineness and positive regard to their students, students had fewer feelings of anxiety. Reducing stress and anxiety in the classroom could be a step forward in

supporting adult immigrant ESL students that have experienced trauma or are experiencing mental health issues such as stress or anxiety.

Behaviours that convey genuineness were observed in the classroom observations, but not as readily as empathy and positive regard. There were some classroom observations that support what the participants expressed in the focus groups – that genuineness is a key component in building relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

There was one theme that was related to how participants implement the core condition of genuineness in their adult immigrant ESL classroom included: *Classroom behaviours that express genuineness*.

Genuineness was implemented by the participants sharing aspects of their personal life such as personal opinions or feelings. This supports Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) who explained realness as being open to share one's feelings. There were also many examples of participants implementing genuineness by reducing the hierarchical student-teacher relationship and being more friend-like in the classroom. This was done by circulation in the classroom during activities and participants positioning themselves physically at the same level as the students, or communicating with students like peers, and not being too directive; for example, by asking students to check if an answer was incorrect rather than saying it was incorrect in front of the class.

Another theme identified was barriers that hinder use of the core conditions and building supportive relationships with their students. These include the personal emotional state of the teacher and how this can affect their ability to be empathetic, genuine or have positive regard for their students. Other barriers included patience, understanding certain cultures more than others, openness of students to making connections, and lack of time develop student-teacher

relationships because of workload.

Concerning my own reflections on these findings, what was unexpected was how much the little things matter. Initially I had expected to see grand gestures or behaviours that showed empathy, genuineness or positive regard, but we quickly discovered that this is unusual, and that it is the little actions or behaviours that matter. Also, I think it is worth highlighting the benefits of being non-judgmental and empathetic in the classroom. All of the comments and examples that were described by the participants really showed how much benefit these expressions of the core conditions could have. The benefit for the student is huge – they are more likely to be able to get the support they need, for example with their mental health. This may help them not only in their ESL learning, but it also may have a more far-reaching impact on integration into Canadian society, and learning how to communicate effectively in a new cultural environment. In addition, the benefit for the teacher and the adult immigrant ESL program is significant because of the reduction in behavioural issues in the classroom. A reduction in behaviour issues is likely to mean an increase in instructional time and learning, as well as less stress for teachers and other staff. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) talked about this benefit too.

Research Question 3. What is the relationship between empathy, genuineness and positive regard in building supportive relationships between adult immigrant ESL teachers and their students?

Data related to teacher perceptions of this research question was gathered from focus groups and interviews conducted within this study and reflections from classroom observations.

Many participants expressed that all of the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard played an important role, and that they all needed to be present and be implemented together in order to build supportive relationships in their classrooms. Classroom

observations supported this, as it was evident that these conditions are interrelated and that teachers implement behaviours related to them, or a combination of them, throughout their lessons. For example, a teacher may be talking to the class about a personal experience (genuineness), and then listen actively when a student comments on the experience and communicates an understanding of the student's perspective (empathy) with acceptance, care and warmth (positive regard). These results support Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) who found all of the core conditions were important and more effective when they are all present and work together to build relationships between students and teachers.

Empathy was overwhelmingly seen by participants as the most essential condition for building supportive relationships in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and for many, one of the most important parts of teaching in general. Participants expressed that empathy was the governing core trait, at the core of developing supportive relationships with students. These results agree with Aspy and Roebuck (1977) who also found empathy was the governing trait and that teachers with high empathy levels usually displayed positive regard and genuineness as well. As mentioned previously, Aspy and Roebuck (1977) summed up their research simply by saying, "kids don't learn from people they don't like; but they do learn from people they do like" (p. 31). In this study, from what participants expressed, much the same could be said for adult immigrant ESL students – they will learn from teachers they like.

Participants also expressed that the core conditions were important in building trust and respect with their students. This partially supports Cornelius-White's (2007) findings that warmth (positive regard) was the first step to building trust and other conditions needed for a facilitative teacher-student relationship.

Concerning my own reflections on these findings, I think the findings were expected. I think that it is hard to make a true assessment on the relationships between the core conditions without gathering more specific data, as the data here is based on teacher perceptions. Some data suggests alternative conclusions. For example, Tudor and Worrall (1994) claimed that genuineness was the most central and fundamental of the three core conditions. They explained that positive regard and acceptance only come after genuinely allowing oneself to experience and be aware of responses to a client. I do not think that is easy to confirm this finding based on teacher perceptions in a study such as this. It is very difficult to deconstruct and analyze exactly the relationship between the core conditions themselves, let alone when considering other important conditions for supportive relationships such as trust, respect and safety. A deep analysis of the relationship between trust, respect and safety and the core conditions was out of the scope of this study, but would be an area recommended for future research

Conclusion

The theoretical base of this study was Carl Roger's (1995) Person-Centred Approach. This is a counselling approach where the client is seen as the expert in their life and should decide what the meaning of their life is. In this approach, the therapist aims to create a supportive, open environment with the client so that they can grow and discover things themselves. This environment is created when the therapist embodies three conditions – empathy, genuineness and positive regard. This supportive environment is created so that the client feels comfortable to be themselves and express their thoughts and feelings without judgment (Casemore, 2011). In this study, we can clearly see that the Person-Centred Approach is relevant in adult immigrant ESL education too. The findings suggests that the core conditions to the Person-Centred Approach are essential in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and the data

suggests that there are huge benefits in embodying the core conditions and implementing behaviours related to the core conditions in adult immigrant ESL classrooms.

The findings of this study were, in many ways, not surprising. Rogers (1995) has produced a lot of evidence to show the core conditions are essential to building supportive relationships, and many researchers have shown this is important in educational contexts. Based on the review of literature that was done; for example with syntheses of meta-analyses such as Hattie (2009), and meta-analyses such as Cornelius-White, (2007) and other large scale studies such as Aspy and Roebuck (1982), it was evident that supportive teacher student relationships were extremely important for positive student outcomes. The challenge with this data is that it was often based on research done on elementary or high school students, so there is a need to explore these ideas with adult students. Also, while it is clear that the core conditions are strongly interrelated and work together, the research appeared to be less clear on which of the core conditions is most influential on the other core conditions or student outcomes.

The findings of this study have shown that teachers believe that the core conditions are just as important for teachers of adult immigrant ESL students, as they are for elementary and high school students. These perceptions were supported in classroom observations. It is important to note that this does not mean that adult immigrant ESL students can be taught in the same ways as elementary or high school students, but it does give evidence that the core conditions benefit the students in many of the same ways.

It is important to remember that the focus in this study is on the relationship between the teacher and student. This has been identified as an essential part of being an effective teacher (Cornelius-White, 2007), but it should also be remembered that there are many other essential elements of being an effective teacher. For example, Lowman (1996) found that the most

effective teachers had clear organization, and presented in interesting ways. Feldman (1997) also found that dimensions such as teacher preparation and organization of the course, had a strong correlation with student achievement. An adult immigrant ESL teacher can develop very supportive relationships with their students using the core conditions, but if they are unable to organize, explain and teach students in an interesting way, then they will likely not be a very effective teacher.

Just as Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) concluded, while findings in this study suggest empathy is likely one of the most important contributors to facilitate learning, all of the core conditions are important and are more effective when they are all present and work together to build relationships between students and teachers.

A model of support.

This research study identified core conditions and behaviours that convey core conditions that lead to supportive relationships with adult immigrant ESL students. Figure 2, on page 157, is a diagram that I propose to represent the core conditions, their related behaviours, the relationship between them and their level of importance.

In this diagram, the darker circle in the Venn diagram represents what is most essential and foundational for adult immigrant ESL teachers to create supportive relationships with their students, which is empathy. There are two other circles that overlap with empathy, and with each other, represent what teachers identified as other essential conditions to create supportive relationships in their adult immigrant ESL classrooms – genuineness and positive regard. These circles all interlock and overlap. The overlapping represents how one condition is related to the other.

This model can be used to show how teachers can create supportive relationships in their adult immigrant ESL classrooms and was created from data from this study, which was outlined in this chapter and the previous chapter.

Considerations and Limitations

There were twelve participants in this study, with a range of ages, genders, levels of education, and levels of teaching experience. The participants were also from a range of different sites, so were quite representative of the adult immigrant ESL teacher population; however, it would have increased the depth of the data if there had been more participants in the study.

It should be mentioned that the nature of qualitative research means that it is interpretive (Creswell, 2012), so the interpretation of the data that I make, may not be the same as another researcher would make. I have included measures to ensure accuracy and credibility of findings, but there will always be an element of interpretation in this type of research.

Although it is certainly beneficial to have data collected from observations as well as focus groups and interviews, there were limitations due to the short amount of time that the participants could be observed. Due to a restricted amount of time due to the researcher's schedule, the observations were limited to three participants, who were observed for 90 minutes only. Although much was observed during these observations, and there were checks to see if it was a typical lesson, it may have been beneficial to make multiple visits to the same teacher's classroom, or have longer observations of three hours, which would allow more observation of interactions between teachers and students.

One final limitation is related to sampling. There was some difficulty in recruiting participants because one intended site to recruit from had a delay in the approval process. In the end, due to time constraints, alternative recruitment strategies needed to be used to recruit some

participants. Three recently retired adult immigrant ESL teachers known to the researcher were contacted directly for participation for one focus group only. Although it is unlikely, it is possible that the researcher's relationship with these participants could have influenced their responses in the focus group.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research has contributed to the body of research that has been conducted on the core conditions within education and to the small body of research related to the core conditions in adult education. In the area of adult immigrant ESL education, there is a dearth of research on student-teacher relationships. This is a gap that needs to be filled, so I would encourage future research in this area. One area of future research that would be recommended would be a deeper analysis of the relationship between trust, respect, safety and the core conditions, as data in this study suggests that these conditions are strongly related and important in the adult immigrant ESL classroom.

In this study, participants also expressed many benefits to conveying the core conditions in adult immigrant ESL classroom. For example, reduction of behavior issues in the classroom. There may be many educational, social and economic benefits to improving adult immigrant education. Therefore, I would also recommend further research on this topic, with a greater number of participants from across Canada. One direction to go in would be exploring some of the more specific benefits further; for example, researching the link between the core conditions and adult immigrant ESL achievement in language training, or the link between the core conditions and reduction of barriers to learning, such as behavioural issues in adult immigrant ESL classrooms.

Recommendations for the Classroom

From the findings from this research, I can offer some recommendations for adult immigrant ESL teachers, programs and funders.

Firstly, for adult immigrant ESL teachers, I would recommend that they reflect on the core conditions and how they might try to convey more empathy, genuineness and positive regard with their students. From the data gathered in this study, the benefits of the core conditions are significant for students and for teachers. Consider the benefits of being genuine – opening up and sharing opinions and feelings in the classroom, and creating a more friendly relationship with students without the traditional hierarchical student-teacher relationship. Consider the benefits of having positive regard for others – being kind, warm and caring and withholding judgment in order to create an atmosphere of safety in the classroom. Finally, and most importantly, consider the benefits of being empathetic - understanding the unique challenges immigrants face, relating personal experience, and listening actively.

Most teachers in the adult immigrant ESL sector have probably felt intuitively that these conditions or behaviours that express these conditions, are helpful in the classroom, but I hope that this research somewhat validates some of those feelings and encourages teachers to continue with development of these core conditions and gives a renewed focus to these aspects of good teaching. Of course, amongst all of this, teachers do need to remember that their adult immigrant ESL students may not have much experience being taught in a way that embodies the core conditions, so they may need to be guided to understand this approach to teaching. With development and use of behaviours that convey the core conditions, this guidance is likely to be easier.

For adult immigrant ESL programs and funders, I would suggest making the core conditions a focal point when planning for the future of immigrant education. Some practical ways of doing this were suggested by participants in this study and may include:

1. Designing ways that teachers can become more informed on cultures, history, and current events in their students' cultures/countries of origin. This will help teachers to have a greater understanding of their students, and likely increase ability to empathize with them. As Beth said:

I also think it's important to be well informed. If you know what is going on in the Congo and hear this person has emerged with another chance you have to respect them and I'm not saying you should express sympathy but you have to know what they've been through and what this second chance means to them. But you need to stay well informed. You come from Honduras, right. You come from Venezuela, you know what's going on there.

2. Allowing more time for teachers to develop relationships with their students. As one of the participants, Heather, said, time to develop relationships with students is “*not acknowledged in employment for instructors and I think that... building in time to foster strong relationships will lead to better learning, better results.*”

3. Encouraging professional training, mentorships and more time for teachers to observe teachers that are more experienced or observe themselves via recordings. Teacher training programs often have a limited amount of practicum hours, and new

teachers do not have much time to observe and learn. One of the barriers to genuineness was experience. Many participants expressed that it took them years of teaching experience before they could really open up and share themselves in front of the class, and some thought that this process could be sped up with instruction or mentoring. As Sarah explained:

When I started, I was a very teacher-centered teacher, ... but with life experience ... negative things happening, it's experience and the choice to choose ... if you're nervous thinking they are judging you, you can switch that by saying you're helping them and when you help you just feel more generous ... instructing or mentoring ... I think it has to be modeled, that will help speed things up.

There is some evidence (Aspy and Roebuck, 1982) that teachers can be trained successfully in interpersonal functioning focused on the core conditions.

Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010) discussed the benefit of teachers observing their own teaching through video or audio recordings, as it allows the teacher to see the class from the perspective of a student. Teachers could use self-guided feedback tools that focus on the core conditions, so they would have a great opportunity to learn from these observations.

There is a lot of research evidence to show that student-teacher relationships are an essential part of effective teaching, and in this study, adult immigrant ESL teachers expressed that the core conditions were essential to building a supportive, safe, respectful and trusting relationships with their students. Developing these types of relationships allows adult immigrant ESL students to learn in an environment that is non-judgmental, and comfortable, so that they are

able to freely express their feelings, thoughts and concerns. The findings in this study suggest that this type of environment in the classroom leads to better learning outcomes. There are a large number of immigrants that enter Canada every year, and they need to be supported in the most effective way in order for them to have the best possible chance of success with a new language and culture in their new country. This is also important considering the aging population of Canada and the increasing need for immigration for Canada's workforce.

There is still much to learn about the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and positive regard and the role they can play in adult immigrant ESL classrooms, but from the findings in this study, it can be said that these conditions have great benefit for teachers and students. This study found that all of the core conditions were helpful for teachers to develop supportive, open relationships with their students, and they had a positive effect on learning. From the findings in this study, and past research, there appears to be very few negative impacts of developing supportive relationships with student through the core conditions in adult immigrant ESL classrooms. Therefore, I am confident promoting the development and cultivation of the core conditions, especially in the adult immigrant ESL classroom. As one of the participants, Carl said, *"The world can do with more kindness..., more empathy..., more positive regard and more genuineness, so go out and do it."*

To conclude, in this study I referred to the core conditions as conditions and as behaviours, but they can be seen as more than that. Carl Rogers (1980) explained empathy, genuineness and positive regard as a way of being. I believe that this way of being can be hugely beneficial in one's life, and especially for teachers, and their adult immigrant ESL students. The title of this thesis refers to empathy, genuineness and positive regard as the heart of teaching. It is my belief, and findings in this study have confirmed, that student-teacher relationships are at the

EMPATHY, GENUINENESS AND POSITIVE REGARD

core, or heart, of good teaching. In order to develop these relationships, empathy, genuineness and positive regard are essential.

The heart of teaching can also refer to a teacher's dedication to helping their students. Adult immigrant ESL teachers are not just teaching content. They are helping their students better their lives and to do this well, it involves a greater commitment in support. I have witnessed this in this study and in my job, and I am inspired by it. I encourage teachers to continue this way of being.

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TABLE 1***2015 Pilot Study - Summary of Findings***

Common Themes	Explanation
Developing Empathy	Many of the teachers develop empathy by relating to their own experiences; for example, travelling or living in a foreign country, learning a new language or their own experience of immigration. Seeing the struggles that a immigrant student is going through firsthand brings a stronger reality to the situation, and seems to increase empathetic feelings.
Empathy's Many Roles	As teachers learn more about their students' life experiences, they developed more and more empathy for the students and their situations. This often becomes a motivating force for altruistic helping. The empathy that the teacher has for the students seems to lead to less stereotyping, and less judgment based solely on surface behaviors.

Developing a Sense of Community	An important part of the developing connections in the classroom was through development of community. A sense of community was created by including informal social time, and by creating a respectful, safe, inclusive and non-judgmental classroom environment.
Being Aware of Limits	Many participants expressed the need for balance between developing personal relationships with students and maintaining professional teacher duties, and the limits to the level of help that they could provide.
Suggestions for the Future	Multiple suggestions were made about how to create more supportive and caring adult immigrant ESL classrooms. Overwhelmingly, these suggestions were focused on learning more about the student's coming into their classrooms - cultures, histories, and experiences in general.

TABLE 2***Participant Demographics***

Name	Participation	Gender	Age Group	Level of Education	Years of ESL Teaching Experience	Predominant Teaching Experience (Levels)
Sarah	Focus Group, Observation and interview	F	50s	Bachelors	16-20	Intermediate to Advanced
Carl	Focus Group, Observation and interview	M	30s	Bachelors	5-10	Intermediate to Advanced
Bob	Focus Group, Observation and interview	M	30s	Bachelors	5-10	Beginner - Low Intermediate
Vicky	Focus Group	F	30s	Bachelors	1-4	Intermediate to Advanced
Vanessa	Focus Group	F	20s	Bachelors	1-4	Beginner - Low Intermediate
Mary	Focus Group	F	50s	Bachelors	5-10	Beginner - Low Intermediate
Barbara	Focus Group	F	40s	Masters	20+	Intermediate to Advanced
Beth	Focus Group	F	70s	Bachelors	20+	Intermediate to Advanced
Grace	Focus Group	F	50s	Bachelors	5-10	Beginner - Low Intermediate

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Heather	Focus Group	F	40s	Bachelors	20+	Intermediate to Advanced
Michelle	Focus Group	F	50s	Bachelors	5-10	Intermediate to Advanced
Veronica	Focus Group	F	60s	Masters	1-4	Intermediate to Advanced

TABLE 3***Themes and Sub-Themes*****Related to teacher perceptions**

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Understanding the unique challenges immigrants face	1.1 Understanding trauma and past events 1.2 Learning a new culture, language and hierarchy 1.3 Being a mother figure 1.4 Going above and beyond
2. Developing understanding from personal experience	
3. The effect of empathy on learning	
4. Being non-judgmental and accepting	
5. Being kind, warm and caring	5.1 Encouragement and affirmations
6. Creating a feeling of safety	6.1 Supporting students with making mistakes 6.2 Inclusivity
7. The effect of positive regard on learning	
8. Opening up - sharing oneself	8.1 More experience leads to being more genuine 8.2 Admitting flaws
9. Creating friend-like relationships/reducing hierarchy	9.1 Maintaining professional boundaries
10. Being student-centred	

Related to implementation in the classroom

11. Empathetic classroom behaviours	11.1 Listening actively
12 Building empathy in students by modelling	
13 Stories of how empathetic teaching has helped students	
14. Classroom behaviours that express positive regard	14.1 Use of encouragement and affirmations 14.2 Use of humour
15. Stories of how teaching with positive regard has helped students	
16. Classroom behaviours that express genuineness	16.1 Sharing oneself 16.2 Being friendly/reducing hierarchy in the classroom
17. The little things matter	
18. Barriers to creating supportive relationships	

Related to relationship between core conditions

19. The most essential condition is empathy

20. The inter-relatedness of the core conditions

21. Trust, respect and the core conditions

FIGURE 1

Hattie's (2009) Barometer of Influences for the Influence of Homework

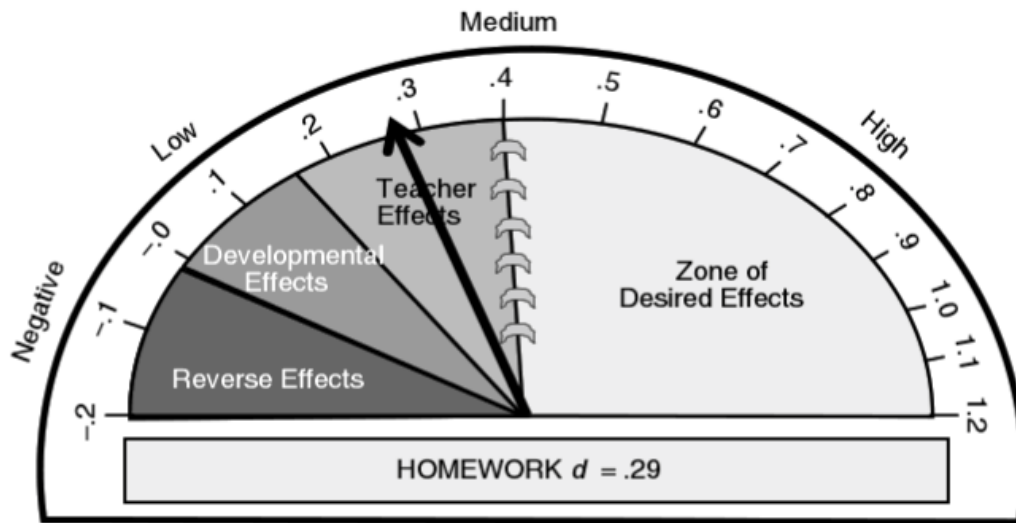
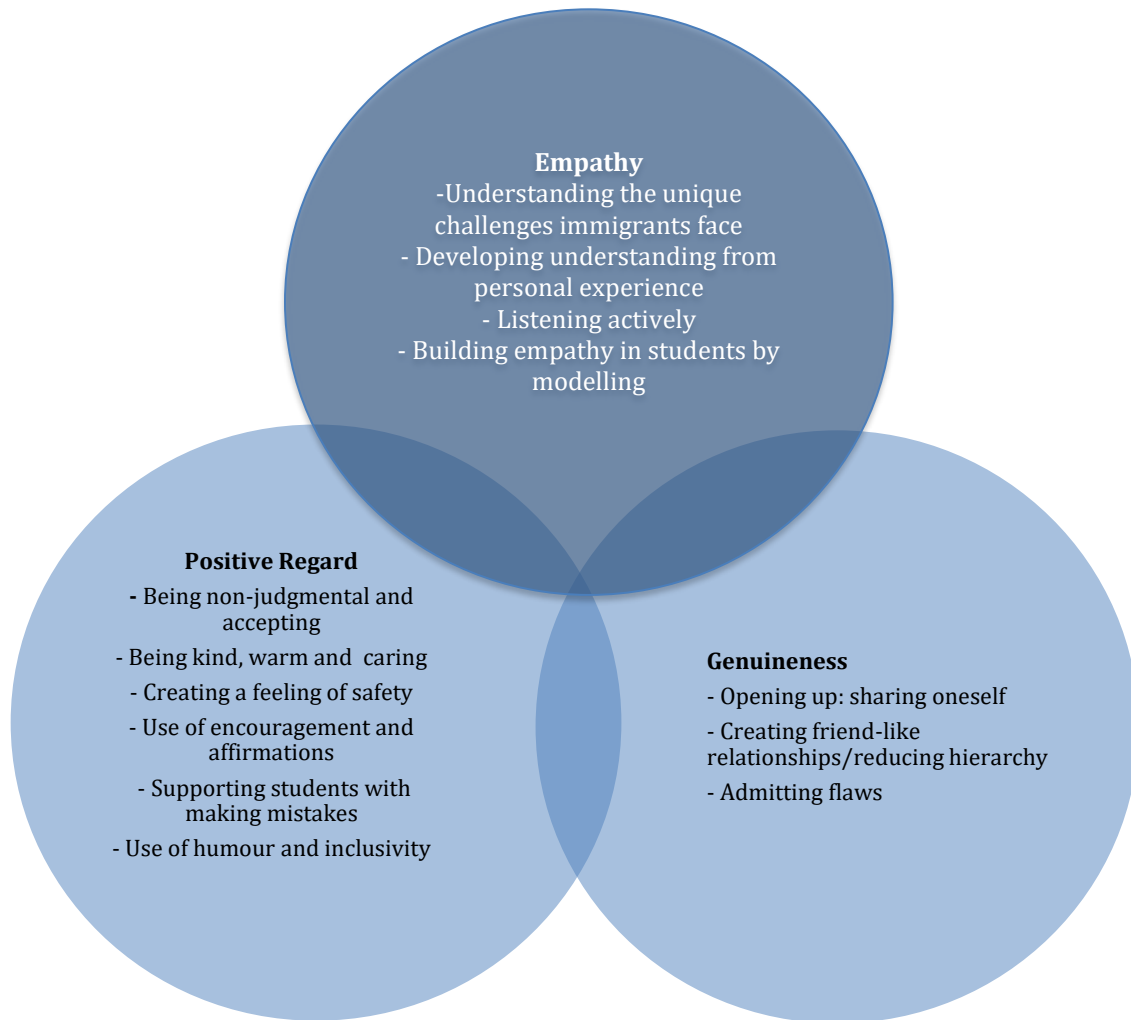


FIGURE 2

Essential Conditions and Behaviours for Teachers to Create Supportive Relationships in the Adult Immigrant ESL Classroom.



APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration,
Foundations and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

Date:

Dear _____,

I have now received ethics approval and am ready to move ahead with my research, so I was wondering if you could help me contact teachers to recruit for this study. I would like to send out the recruitment email/letter in the next week if possible.

I have attached the ethics approval document. To gain this approval, I have written all consent documents that will be used in the research. I have attached a sample to this email so that you have a copy. Also, I know you will be interested in the results of the study. I am happy to send you a copy of my thesis when it is complete, but I am guessing you might prefer a short summary of the results! I can provide that within a month or so of conducting the research.

Below are some more details of the study. I apologize for the length of this email, but it contains information that was essential to share with you in order to get ethics approval!

As you know, I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting research as part of my thesis. I am interested in teacher's perceptions of the roles empathy, positive regard and genuineness play in creating supportive relationships with students in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and I would like to explore ways in which to do this more effectively.

I aim to recruit twelve participants for this study from three ESL Service Providers in Winnipeg, and I would like to request that your program to be one of the sites for recruitment. Participants would need to give consent to participate in a focus group, and possible classroom observation and interview.

For recruitment, I request that the attached email be sent to all teachers in your program. Participants will be asked to respond to the researcher directly. I will try to select a group of participants with a range of genders, ages, class levels, levels of training/education in teaching ESL and levels of teaching experience. Participants will reply to me directly, so you will not know who is selected to participate in the study. This is important in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality in this study.

All participants in this study will participate in a focus group and will be asked to share their views on how empathy, genuineness and positive regard influence relationships with their students. The focus group will take a maximum of 90 minutes and will be conducted in a location that is convenient and appropriate for the participants. The location and exact time of the focus groups will be decided when participants are selected, as they will come from three different sites. I will provide some light refreshments for the participants.

After the focus group, I would also like to conduct one classroom observation and a follow up interview in order to get more detailed information on the same topic. I will select three of the focus group participants for this, based on the richness of the data that I gather from each participant in the focus groups. The observation and interview will be conducted in a location and time that is convenient and appropriate for the participants.

Each classroom observation is expected to take a maximum of one and a half hours. Field notes will be taken and special attention will be paid to the roles empathy, positive regard and genuineness play in the classroom.

The interviews will be conducted after the observations with three participants who have participated in the focus groups and observations. I will try to dig deeper into the focus group responses, asking for specific examples, and prompting for further information. I will also ask questions based on themes and questions raised in the classroom observations, to verify what was observed. The interviews are expected to take a maximum of 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted at a separate time, in a location and time that is convenient and appropriate for the participant.

I will have an assistant that will take independent notes and observations in the focus group and classroom observations. This assistant is an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research.

All data gathered from this study will be kept strictly confidential. The names of the participants will be known to the researcher, research assistant, transcriber and my thesis advisor; however, all field notes and feedback will be coded so that no names or other identifying information will be included in documents or written information. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and all documents will be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Contact information and consents will be stored separately from the transcribed data. A digital voice recorder will be used to record the focus group and interview. Audio recordings will be transcribed by Translation Agency of Manitoba to ensure accurate reporting of the information that participants provide. A confidentiality agreement for transcription services will be signed by Translation Agency of Manitoba agreeing to maintain confidentiality in regard to all audio recordings, not to make copies, to store data securely and to delete or return all recordings. Data will also be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Data will be destroyed (written notes shredded, computer and voice recorder files erased) at the completion of the study, by September 2019. I will have access to the raw data, as will the research assistant, the transcriber and my thesis advisor, Robert Renaud. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122, or by e-mail at humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

If you require further information, please contact me directly - Ben Starkey, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca.

Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Ben

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration,
Foundations and PsychologyEducation Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

Date:

Dear ESL teachers,

You are receiving this letter because I am looking for ESL teachers of adult immigrant ESL students to participate in a research study. Your director agreed to help me contact teachers to recruit for this study. I am planning to conduct a focus group on Tue Nov 13th from 4:15-5:45 at the Millennium library. If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly - Ben Starkey, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca. Below are some details of the research.

I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting research as part of my thesis. I am interested in teacher's perceptions of the roles empathy, positive regard and genuineness play in creating supportive relationships with students in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and I would like to explore ways in which to do this more effectively.

I would like to recruit six participants for the focus group. I will aim to gather participants with a range of genders, ages, class levels, levels of training/education in teaching ESL and levels of teaching experience. Participants would need to give consent to participate in the focus group.

All participants in this study will participate in a focus group and will be asked to share their views on how empathy, genuineness and positive regard influence relationships with their students. The focus group will take a maximum of 90 minutes. I will provide some light refreshments for the participants and pay for parking.

I will have an assistant that will take independent notes and observations in the focus group. This assistant is an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research.

All data gathered from this study will be kept strictly confidential. The names of the participants will be known to the researcher, research assistant, transcriber and my thesis advisor; however, all field notes and feedback will be coded so that no names or other identifying information will be included in documents or written information. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and all documents will be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Contact information and consents will be stored separately from the transcribed data. A digital voice recorder will be used to record the focus group and interview. Audio recordings will be

transcribed by Translation Agency of Manitoba to ensure accurate reporting of the information that participants provide. A confidentiality agreement for transcription services will be signed by Translation Agency of Manitoba agreeing to maintain confidentiality in regard to all audio recordings, not to make copies, to store data securely and to delete or return all recordings. Data will also be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Data will be destroyed (written notes shredded, computer and voice recorder files erased) at the completion of the study, by September 2019. I will have access to the raw data, as will the research assistant, the transcriber and my thesis advisor, Robert Renaud. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122, or by e-mail at humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

If you are interested in participating, or you require further information, please contact me directly - Ben Starkey, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca. Please include in your email some brief information including gender, age, class level you are teaching currently and have taught in the past, levels of training/education in teaching ESL and levels of teaching experience.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Ben Starkey

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS



Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration,
Foundations and PsychologyEducation Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
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CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Research Project Title: “The Heart of Teaching: Exploring Empathy, Genuineness and Positive Regard in the Adult Immigrant ESL Classroom”

Principal Investigator: Ben Starkey, 300C 123 Main St, R3C 1A3, Winnipeg, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca.

Research Supervisor: Robert Renaud, Room 227A, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, (204) 474-9017, Robert.Renaud@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a Master’s student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting research as part of my thesis. I am interested in teacher’s perceptions of the roles empathy, positive regard and genuineness play in creating supportive relationships with students in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and I would like to explore ways in which to do this more effectively.

I am writing to request your participation in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in a focus group, and possible classroom observation and interview. You will be asked to share your views on how empathy, genuineness and positive regard influence relationships with your students. The focus group will take a maximum of 90 minutes. I aim to gather participants with a range of genders, ages, class levels, levels of training/education in teaching ESL and levels of teaching experience. If invited to participate, the classroom observation is expected to take a maximum of one and a half hours, and the interview is expected to take a maximum of 60 minutes. The classroom observation will be done in the teacher’s classroom at a time that is appropriate and convenient for the participant. Focus groups and interviews will be conducted in a location that is convenient and appropriate for the participants. You will, of course, have the chance to decline this if you do not want to participate in this portion of the study.

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I will have an assistant that will take independent notes and observations in the focus group and classroom observations. This assistant is an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research.

The interview will be recorded, but the data that is collected will only be used to help me make detailed notes. All data gathered from this study will be kept strictly confidential. The names of the participants will be known to the researcher, research assistant, transcriber and my thesis advisor; however, all field notes and feedback will be coded so that no names or other identifying information will be included in documents or written information. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and all documents will be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Contact information and consents will be stored separately from the transcribed data. A digital voice recorder will be used to record the focus group and interview. Audio recordings will be transcribed by Translation Agency of Manitoba to ensure accurate reporting of the information that participants provide. A confidentiality agreement for transcription services will be signed by Translation Agency of Manitoba agreeing to maintain confidentiality in regard to all audio recordings, not to make copies, to store data securely and to delete or return all recordings. Data will also be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Data will be destroyed (written notes shredded, computer and voice recorder files erased) at the completion of the study, by September 2019. I will have access to the raw data, as will the research assistant, the transcriber and my thesis advisor, Robert Renaud. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba.

If I decide to use the data for further research, I will again request your permission for that. I may contact participants for additional studies in the future, but there is no obligation to agree to this participation.

The data gathered in this study may benefit participants, as it may give them valuable ideas about how to create more supportive relationships with students in their classroom. If participants would like a copy of my thesis, or relevant sections of the thesis, I would be happy to provide access to this, upon request, once the study is completed.

Participants can request a short 1-2 page summary of the results of the study within one month after the study has been completed. If you would like this, please provide your contact information here:

Name: _____

Email address: _____

All participants can discontinue their participation in the study at any time up to the point that all of the data is compiled and anonymized. Participants can simply by letting me know verbally, or in writing.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you require further information, please contact me directly - Ben Starkey, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca. If there are any concerns, you can also contact my Thesis Advisor – Robert Renaud, 204) 474-9017, Robert.Renaud@umanitoba.ca

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122, or by e-mail at humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D: CONFIDENTIALITY PLEDGE FOR FOCUS GROUP

Confidentiality Pledge

Research Project Title: “The Heart of Teaching: Exploring Empathy, Genuineness and Positive Regard in the Adult Immigrant ESL Classroom”

I understand that I am participating in this focus group for research purposes. I will not disclose the contents of the discussion outside of the discussion group.

Participant’s signature _____ Date _____

Participant’s name (printed) _____

APPENDIX E: CONFIDENTIALITY OATH FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANT

CONFIDENTIALITY OATH

(Check the following that apply)

I understand that as an:

☐ interpreter

☐ transcriber

☐ audio assistant

☐ photo or video assistant

☐ research assistant

☐ other *(Please specify)* _____

for a study being conducted by _____ of the Department of _____, University of Manitoba, and or under the supervision of Professor _____

_____, confidential information will be made known to me.

☐ I agree to keep all information collected during this study confidential and will not reveal by speaking, communicating or transmitting this information in written, photographic, sound, electronic (disks, tapes, transcripts, email) or in any other way to anyone outside the research team.

☐ I will tell the researchers as soon as I discover that I know any participant either as a family member, friend, or acquaintance or in any other way; so that the researcher can take the appropriate steps to manage or minimize any conflicts of interest that might occur because of any dual roles I may have.

Name: _____ Signature: _____
(Please Print)

Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Witness Signature: _____
(Please Print)

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

FOCUS GROUP 2

Housekeeping: refreshments, parking money, introductions, washroom.

- I ask that all participants maintain the confidentiality of the other participants who take part. I have a confidentiality pledge to sign about this and a consent form for the research.
- I will be emailing a copy of all transcriptions to the participants involved, including a short summary of the main themes that were identified. You will be given the opportunity to verify accuracy and suggest revisions.

Preamble:

Thank you for your participation in this focus group. I am conducting this discussion as part of my thesis study. This is part of the Masters program in Adult and Post-Secondary Education at the University of Manitoba. My background: I was an adult immigrant ESL teacher, now administrator in EAL program. Influenced by Carl Rogers, not only in regard to person-centered teaching, but to humanistic counseling theories and how they relate to teaching (empathy, positive regard, genuineness), and also in the importance of the teacher-student relationship. The purpose of this focus group is for you to share your views on how teachers build supportive relationships with their students and the role that empathy, positive regard, and genuineness play in this. I hope by analyzing these conditions more deeply, I may find out what kind of role these conditions play in the classroom, especially in teaching adult immigrant ESL students.

This focus group will take 90 minutes. After the focus group is finished, some of you could be invited to participate in an observation of your class, and follow up interview. You will, of course, have the chance to decline this if you do not want to participate in this portion of the study.

I will not be using any names or including any identifying information about you in my written notes, and all the information you share will be kept confidential. Myself, the research assistant, the transcriber and my advisor, Robert Renaud, will have access to the raw data. Pseudonyms will be used for names of participants and also for names of programs that they come from. The pseudonyms mean that everyone's identity will be kept confidential. I ask that all participants maintain the confidentiality of the other participants who take part. That is why we signed the pledge form. With your permission, I will be making an audio recording of the discussion. Audio recordings will be transcribed by Translation Agency of Manitoba to ensure accurate reporting of the information that participants provide. A confidentiality agreement for transcription services has been signed by Translation Agency of Manitoba agreeing to maintain confidentiality in regard to all audio recordings.

We will get started in a minute. Discussion guidelines: one person talks at a time, everyone will be given the opportunity to speak (go around circle) but all your responses are voluntary, so feel free to let me know if you would prefer not to answer. If someone says something that sparks a

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thought, you can certainly chime in and make it more open discussion. I may prompt for more information at times. I may also bring the conversation back to the question at times, as I want to make sure to capture your views on the questions. Focus on topic is important, because we have such as short time and this data is very important for my research. This means I may put some items in the parking lot and if we have time, we will come back to it. For most questions, I will give you a minute to write a few notes, prior to the discussion portion. Please feel free to ask for clarification at any time. Let's begin

****START RECORDING***

Focus Group 2 Questions Nov 20, 2018

1. Introductions (names, class level, school)
2. Do you have a general approach to teaching/ a teaching philosophy?
3. [*Genuineness: being authentic, open and honest towards oneself, and towards others. Being transparent, self aware, and presenting yourself as you are, with sincerity and without pretense.*]
Is it important to be genuine for your adult immigrant ESL students? How does your genuineness influence your students?
4. [*Positive regard: involves going beyond what is often an initial response towards a person, a judgment related to liking or not liking them, and treating them with warmth and caring at all times*]
Is it important to have positive regard for your adult immigrant ESL students? How does your positive regard influence your students?
5. [*Empathy: - the ability to understand and identify another's feelings and perspectives and the ability to communicate that understanding to the individual with whom one is empathizing.*]
Is it important to have empathy for your adult immigrant ESL students? How does your empathy influence your students?
6. What does a supportive relationship between a teacher and student look like to you?
7. Is there one of these core conditions that is the governing condition? (determines or controls the others)

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8. What are the barriers to the use of the core conditions in your classroom?
9. Any other comments or additions that you would like to make about this topic?

***RAN OUT OF TIME, BUT HAVE MORE COMMENTS YOU WANTED TO ADD?
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO EMAIL ME WITH ANY FURTHER RESPONSES UP TO A
WEEK AFTER THE FOCUS GROUP.**

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX G: PRE-OBSERVATION SCRIPT FOR TEACHER

PRE-OBSERVATION SCRIPT

Tomorrow, we will have two visitors from the University of Manitoba in our class doing research. They are researching ESL teachers and how they create relationships with their students, so they will be observing my teaching. Their main goal is observing the teacher and not the students, but because we interact in the class, they may observe and make notes when we are doing things together. They are not in any way assessing or evaluating any of the students in the class. In order for them to come to observe the class, they need your permission and we will need to complete a consent form. Is there anyone who would not like to be involved? After today, if you change your mind and decide you do not want to be involved, that is fine, but please let me know as soon as possible.

We will now complete some consent forms. The form gives permission to the researchers to come into our class and observe and make notes on what they see. If you agree to this, please sign and date at the bottom. Feel free to take the forms home to read over them if you like, and to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

PRE-OBSERVATION SCRIPT – SIMPLIFIED LANGUAGE

Tomorrow, we will have two visitors from the University of Manitoba in our class. They will be here to do research. They are studying English teachers. They will be watching my teaching. Their goal is watch the teacher and not the students, but because we are in class together, they may watch and make notes when we are doing activities together. They are not watching the class to test you or study you.

For Ben and Cheryl to watch the class, they need your permission (need to say it is okay) and we will need to complete a consent form. Is there anyone who does not want to participate? If you agree to this (are okay with it), please sign and write the date on the form. If you do not consent (agree), that is fine. You have the right to say yes or no to them being in the classroom. All students in the class must consent (agree) before they can come in the class. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand, and we can ask them. Thank you.

APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS



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CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Research Project Title: “The Heart of Teaching: Exploring Empathy, Genuineness and Positive Regard in the Adult Immigrant ESL Classroom”

Principal Investigator: Ben Starkey, 300C 123 Main St, R3C 1A3, Winnipeg,
starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca.

Research Supervisor: Robert Renaud, Room 227A, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, (204) 474-9017, Robert.Renaud@umanitoba.ca

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I am a Master’s student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting research as part of my thesis. I am interested in teacher’s perceptions of the roles empathy, positive regard and genuineness play in creating supportive relationships with students in the adult immigrant ESL classroom, and I would like to explore ways in which to do this more effectively.

I am writing to request your participation in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, we will come to your class for 90 minutes to observe. We are mainly observing the teacher, not the students, but because teachers and students interact in the class, you may be observed and we may make notes when you are doing things together. Please be aware that we are not in any way assessing or evaluating any of the students in the class.

I will have an assistant that will take independent notes and observations in the focus group and classroom observations. This assistant is an adult immigrant ESL teacher with a PhD and many years of experience in research. Her name is Chery Jerome.

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We will not be recording any names of students, and will use general descriptors (e.g. one male student”) when publishing any of the data related to students. All data gathered from this study will be kept strictly confidential. The names of the participants will be known to the researcher, research assistant and my thesis advisor; however, all field notes and feedback will be coded so that no names or other identifying information will be included in documents or written information. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and all documents will be stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet or on secure computer files. Data will be destroyed (written notes shredded, computer and voice recorder files erased) at the completion of the study, by September 2019. I will have access to the raw data, as will the research assistant, and my thesis advisor, Robert Renaud. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba.

The data gathered in this study may benefit participants, as it may give them valuable ideas about how to create more supportive relationships with students in their classroom. If participants would like a copy of my thesis, or relevant sections of the thesis, I would be happy to provide access to this, upon request, once the study is completed.

Participants can request a short 1-2 page summary of the results of the study within one month after the study has been completed. If you would like this, please provide your contact information here:

Name: _____

Email address: _____

All participants can discontinue their participation in the study at any time up to the point that all of the data is compiled and anonymized. Participants can simply by letting me know verbally, or in writing.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you require further information, please contact me directly - Ben Starkey, starkeyb@myumanitoba.ca. If there are any concerns, you can also contact my Thesis Advisor – Robert Renaud, 204) 474-9017, Robert.Renaud@umanitoba.ca

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122, or by e-mail at humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

EMPATHY, GENUINENESS AND POSITIVE REGARD

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Preamble:

Thank you for your participation in this interview. I am conducting this interview as part of my thesis study. This is part of the Masters program in Adult and Post-Secondary Education at the University of Manitoba.

The purpose of this interview is for you to share your views on how teachers build supportive relationships with your students and the role that empathy, positive regard, and genuineness play in this. I hope by analyzing these conditions more deeply, I may find out what kind of role they play in the classroom, especially in teaching adult immigrant ESL students. In this interview, I hope to build on what was done in the focus group and learned from the classroom observation, adding more specific examples and more detail.

This interview will take 60 minutes. I will not be using any names or including any identifying information about you in my written notes, and all the information you share will be kept confidential. Myself, the research assistant, the transcriber and my advisor, Robert Renaud, will have access to the raw data. Pseudonyms will be used for names of participants and also for names of programs that they come from.

With your permission, I will be making an audio recording of the discussion. Audio recordings will be transcribed by Translation Agency of Manitoba to ensure accurate reporting of the information that participants provide. A confidentiality agreement for transcription services will be signed by Translation Agency of Manitoba agreeing to maintain confidentiality in regard to all audio recordings, not to make copies, to store data securely and to delete or return all recordings. The notes I take will be shredded and any electronic files I create will be erased when my thesis is completed (by Sep, 2019)

We will begin with some general introductions and then ask more specific questions related to the topic. All your responses are voluntary and you are free not to respond to any questions or not comment on items if you so choose. Please feel free to ask for clarification at any time.

1. Introduction (name, class level, school, some more detail on teaching experience)
 - a. Where have you taught most
 - b. How has your teaching changed from when you began until now?
2. Classroom observation:
 - a. How did you feel about the lesson?
 - b. Would you consider the class a typical class?
3. We saw the following strategies/activities/processes used in the classroom in order to build supportive relationships with your students. Can you walk me through some of

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these in details?

- Affirmation (examples) - how does it benefit you and your students?
- Empathy (examples) – do these examples feel like empathy to you?
- Genuineness (examples) – how does personal sharing affect the relationship you have with students?
- Positive Regard (examples) – similar to affirmations, or kindness. Is there a difference?
- Use of Humour – why do you use it? How does it benefit you and your students?

Do you agree that this is how you implement the core conditions? Have you anything to add?

4. We observed many small acts where you were implementing the core conditions (examples above). How influential do you feel these small acts of empathy, genuineness and positive regard are in the classroom? Why?
5. Does a supportive environment in your classroom just develop naturally? How does it start? How do you build on it?
6. Lets now come back to the focus group you participated in. Any more thoughts on what was discussed in the focus group?
7. Here are some themes that seemed to have emerged from the focus group (show memo one – themes). Do you have any further comments, or would you like to add more detail to these?
8. What is your perception of the role of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard in building supportive relationships with your students?
9. What is the relationship between empathy, genuineness and positive regard in building

supportive relationships between adult immigrant ESL teachers and their students?

10. Is there one core condition that is more important than the others? One that governs the others?
11. In your opinion, how can teachers develop more supportive adult immigrant ESL classrooms?
12. What are some barriers to using the core conditions and creating supportive relationships with students?
13. Reducing hierarchy (examples from observation). How does this affect the core conditions/supportive environment in the classroom?
14. Respecting ss as adults (examples from observation). How does this affect the core conditions/supportive environment in the classroom?
15. Any other comments, suggestions or additions that you would like to make about this topic?